



THE
LITERARY CHARACTER,
ILLUSTRATED
BY
THE HISTORY
OF
MEN OF GENIUS,

DRAWN FROM THEIR OWN FEELINGS AND CONFESSIONS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CURIOSITIES OF LITERATURE."

"Poi che veder voi stessi non potete,
Vedete in altri almen quel che voi sete."
Cino da Pistoia, addressed to the Eyes of his Mistress.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY JAMES EASTBURN AND CO.
AT THE LITERARY ROOMS, BROADWAY,
CORNER OF PINE-STREET.

.....
1818.

PN150

.I]52

1818

GIFT
ESTATE OF
WILLIAM C. RIVES
APRIL, 1940

~~~~~  
J. & J. Harper, Printers.  
~~~~~

PREFACE.



I PUBLISHED, in 1795, "an Essay on the Literary Character;" to my own habitual and inherent defects, were superadded those of my youth; the crude production was, however, not ill received, for the Edition disappeared; and the subject was found to be more interesting than the writer.

During the long interval which has elapsed since the first publication, the little volume was often recalled to my recollection, by several, and by some who have since obtained celebrity; they imagined that their attachment to literary pursuits had been strengthened even by so weak an effort. An extraordinary circumstance has concurred with these opin-

ions;—a copy which has accidentally fallen into my hands formerly belonged to the great poetical genius of our times; and the singular fact that it was twice read by him in two subsequent years, at Athens, in 1810 and 1811, instantly convinced me that the volume deserved my attention. I tell this fact assuredly, not from any little vanity which it may appear to betray, for the truth is, were I not as liberal and as candid in respect to my own productions, as I hope I am to others, I could not have been gratified by the present circumstance; for the marginal notes of the noble writer convey no flattery—but amidst their pungency and sometimes their truth, the circumstance that a man of genius could, and did read, this slight effusion at two different periods of his life, was a sufficient authority, at least for an author, to return it once more to the anvil; more knowledge, and more maturity of thought, I may hope, will now fill up the rude sketch of my youth; its radical defects, those which are inherent in every

author, it were unwise for me to hope to remove by suspending the work to a more remote period.

It may be thought that men of genius only should write on men of genius ; as if it were necessary that the physician should be infected with the disease of his patient. He is only an observer, like Sydenham who confined himself to vigilant observation, and the continued experience of tracing the progress of actual cases (and in his department, but not in mine) in the operation of actual remedies. He beautifully says—"Whoever describes a violet exactly as to its colour, taste, smell, form, and other properties, will find the description agree in most particulars with all the violets in the universe."

Nor do I presume to be any thing more than the historian of genius ; whose humble office is only to tell the virtues and the infirmities of his heroes. It is the fashion of the present day to raise up daz-

zling theories of genius; to reason *a priori*; to promulgate abstract paradoxes; to treat with levity the man of genius, because he is *only* a man of genius. I have sought for facts, and have often drawn results unsuspected by myself. I have looked into literary history for the literary character. I have always had in my mind an observation of Lord Bolingbroke —“ Abstract, or general propositions, though never so true, appear obscure or doubtful to us very often till they are explained by examples; when examples are pointed out to us, there is a kind of appeal, with which we are flattered, made to our senses, as well as to our understandings. The instruction comes then from our authority; we yield to fact when we resist speculation.” This will be truth long after the encyclopedic geniuses of the present age, who write on all subjects, and with most spirit on those they know least about, shall have passed away; and Time shall extricate Truth from the deadly embrace of Sophistry.

ON THE
LITERARY CHARACTER,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

ON LITERARY CHARACTERS.

SINCE the discovery of that art which multiplies at will the productions of the human intellect, and spreads them over the universe in the consequent formation of libraries, a class or order of men has arisen, who appear throughout Europe to have derived a generic title in that of literary characters; a denomination which, however vague, defines the pursuits of the individual, and serves, at times, to separate him from other professions.

Formed by the same habits, and influenced by the same motives, notwithstanding the difference of talents and tempers, the opposition of times

and places, they have always preserved among themselves the most striking family resemblance. The literary character, from the objects in which it concerns itself, is of a more independent and permanent nature than those which are perpetually modified by the change of manners, and are more distinctly national. Could we describe the medical, the commercial, or the legal character of other ages, this portrait of antiquity would be like a perished picture: the subject itself would have altered its position in the revolutions of society. It is not so with the literary character. The passion for study; the delight in books; the desire of solitude and celebrity; the obstructions of life; the nature of their habits and pursuits; the triumphs and the disappointments of literary glory; all these are as truly described by Cicero and the younger Pliny, as by Petrarch and Erasmus, and as they have been by Hume and Gibbon. The passion for collecting together the treasures of literature and the miracles of art, was as insatiable a thirst in Atticus as in the French Peiresc, and in our Cracherodes and Townleys. We trace the feelings of our literary contemporaries in all ages, and every people who have deserved to rank among polished nations. Such were those literary characters who have stamped the images of their minds on their works, and that

other race, who preserve the circulation of this intellectual coinage ;

—————Gold of the Dead,
Which Time does still disperse, but not devour.
D'Avenant's Gondibert, c. v. s. 38.

These literary characters now constitute an important body, diffused over enlightened Europe, connected by the secret links of congenial pursuits, and combining often insensibly to themselves in the same common labours. At London, at Paris, and even at Madrid, these men feel the same thirst, which is allayed at the same fountains; the same authors are read, and the same opinions are formed.

Contemporains de tous les hommes,
Et citoyens de tous les lieux.

De la Mothe.

Thus an invisible brotherhood is existing among us, and those who stand connected with it are not always sensible of this kindred alliance. Once the world was made uneasy by rumours of the existence of a society, founded by that extraordinary German Rosicrucius, designed for the search of truth and the reformation of the sciences. Its statutes were yet but partially pro-

mulgated; but many a great principle in morals, many a result of science in the concentrated form of an axiom; and every excellent work which suited the views of the author to preserve anonymous, were mysteriously traced to the president of the Rosicrucians, and not only the society became celebrated, but abused. Descartes, when in Germany, gave himself much trouble to track out the society, that he might consult the great searcher after Truth, but in vain! It did not occur to the young reformer of science in this visionary pursuit, that every philosophical inquirer was a brother, and that the extraordinary and mysterious personage, was indeed himself! for a genius of the first order is always the founder of a society, and, wherever he may be, the brotherhood will delight to acknowledge their master.

These Literary Characters are partially described by Johnson, not without a melancholy colouring. "To talk in private, to think in solitude, to inquire or to answer inquiries, is the business of a scholar. He wanders about the world without pomp or terror, and is neither known nor valued, but by men like himself." But eminent Genius accomplishes a more ample design. He belongs to the world as much as to a nation; even

the great writer himself, at that moment, was not conscious that he was devoting his days to cast the minds of his own contemporaries, and of the next age, in the mighty mould of his own, for he was of that order of men whose individual genius often becomes that of a people. A prouder conception rose in the majestic mind of Milton, of "that lasting fame and perpetuity of praise, which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose PUBLISHED LABOURS advance the good of mankind."

Literature has, in all ages, encountered adversaries from causes sufficiently obvious; but other pursuits have been rarely liable to discover enemies among their own votaries. Yet many literary men openly, or insidiously, would lower the Literary Character, are eager to confuse the ranks in the republic of letters, wanting the virtue which knows to pay its tribute to Cæsar; while they maliciously confer the character of author on that "Ten Thousand," whose recent list is not so much a muster-roll of heroes, as a table of population.*

We may allow the political œconomist to suppose that an author is the manufacturer of a

* See a recent biographical account of ten thousand authors.

certain ware for "a very paltry recompense," as their seer Adam Smith has calculated. It is useless to talk to people who have nothing but millions in their imagination, and whose choicest works of art are spinning jennies; whose principle of "labour" would have all men alike die in harness; or, in their carpentry of human nature, would convert them into wheels and screws, to work the perplexed movements of that ideal machinery called "capital"—these may reasonably doubt of "the utility" of this "unproductive" race. Their heated heads and temperate hearts may satisfy themselves that "that unprosperous race of men, called men of letters," in a system of political œconomy, must necessarily occupy their present state in society, much as formerly when "a scholar and a beggar seem to have been terms very nearly synonymous."* But whenever the political œconomists shall feel,—a calculation of time which who would dare to furnish them with?—that the happiness and prosperity of a people include something more permanent and more evident than "the wealth of a nation," they may form another notion of the literary character.

A more formidable class of ingenious men who derived their reputation and even their fortune in

* Wealth of Nations, v. i. p. 182.

life from their literary character, yet are cold and heartless to the interests of literature—men who have reached their summit and reject the ladder ; for those who have once placed themselves high, feel a sudden abhorrence of climbing. These have risen through the gradations of politics into office, and in that busy world view every thing in a cloud of passions and politics ;—they who once commanded us by their eloquence would now drive us by the single force of despotism ; like Adrian VI. who obtaining the Pontificate as the reward of his studies, yet possessed of the Tiara, persecuted students ; he dreaded, say the Italians, lest his brothers might shake the Pontificate itself. It fares worse with authors when minds of this cast become the arbiters of the public opinion ; when the literary character is first systematically degraded and then sported with, as elephants are made to dance on hot iron ; or the bird plucked of its living feathers is exhibited as a new sort of creature to invite the passengers ! whatever such critics may plead to mortify the vanity of authors, at least it requires as much to give effect to their own polished effrontery. Lower the high self-reverence, the lofty conception of Genius, and you deprive it of the consciousness of its powers with the delightfulness

of its character ; in the blow you give the musical instrument, the invisible soul of its tone is for ever lost.

A lighter class reduce literature to a mere curious amusement ; a great work is likened to a skilful game of billiards, or a piece of music finely executed—and curious researches, to charade making and Chinese puzzles. An author with them is an idler who will not be idle, amusing, or fatiguing others, who are completely so. We have been told that a great genius should not therefore “ ever allow himself to be sensible to his own celebrity, nor deem his pursuits of much consequence however important or successful.” Catholic doctrine to mortify an author into a saint ; Lent all the year, and self-flagellation every day ! This new principle, which no man in his senses would contend with, had been useful to Buffon and Gibbon, to Voltaire and Pope,—who assuredly were too “ sensible to their celebrity, and deemed their pursuits of much consequence,” particularly when “ important and successful.” But this point may be adjusted when we come to examine the importance of an author, and the privilege he may possess of a little anticipating the public, in his self-praise.

Such are the domestic treasons of the literary character against literature—"et tu, Brute!"—but a hero of literature falls not though struck at; he outlives his assassins—and might address them in that language of poetry and tenderness with which a Mexican king reproached his traitorous counsellors: "You were the feathers of my wings, and the eyelids of my eyes."

Every class of men in society have their peculiar sorrows and enjoyments, as they have their habits and their characteristics. In the history of men of genius, we may often open the secret story of their minds; they have, above others, the privilege of communicating their own feelings, and it is their talent to interest us, whether with their pen they talk of themselves, or paint others.

In the history of men of genius let us not neglect those who have devoted themselves to the cultivation of the fine arts; with them genius is alike insulated in their studies; they pass through the same permanent discipline. The histories of literature and art have parallel epochs; and certain artists resemble certain authors.—Hence Milton, Michael Angelo, and Handel! One principle unites the intellectual arts, for

in one principle they originate, and thus it has happened that the same habits and feelings, and the same fortunes have accompanied men who have sometimes, unhappily, imagined that their pursuits were not analogous. In the "world of ear and eye," the poet, the painter, and the musician are kindled by the same inspiration. Thus all is Art and all are artists! This approximation of men apparently of opposite pursuits is so natural, that when Gesner, in his inspiring letter on landscape-painting, recommends to the young painter a constant study of poetry and literature, the impatient artist is made to exclaim, "Must we combine with so many other studies those which belong to literary men? Must we read as well as paint?" "It is useless to reply to this question," says Gesner, "for some important truths must be instinctively felt, perhaps the fundamental ones in the arts." A truly imaginative artist, whose enthusiasm was never absent when he meditated on the art he loved, Barry, thus vehemently broke forth—"Go home from the Academy, light up your lamps, and exercise yourselves in the creative part of your art, with Homer, with Livy; and all the great characters, ancient and modern, for your companions and counsellors."

Every life of a man of genius, composed by himself, presents us with the experimental philosophy of the mind. By living with their brothers, and contemplating on their masters, they will judge from consciousness less erroneously than from discussion; and in forming comparative views and parallel situations, they will discover certain habits and feelings, and find these reflected in themselves.

CHAPTER II.

YOUTH OF GENIUS.

GENIUS, that creative part of art which individualises the artist, belonging to him and to no other,—is it an inherent faculty in the constitutional dispositions of the individual, or can it be formed by the patient acquisitions of art?

Many sources of genius have indeed been laid open to us, but if these may sometimes call it forth, have they ever supplied its want? Could Spenser have struck out a poet in Cowley, Richardson a painter in Reynolds, and Descartes a metaphysician in Mallebranche, had they not borne that vital germ of nature, which, when endowed with its force, is always developing itself to a particular character of genius? The accidents related of these men have occurred to a thousand, who have run the same career; but how does it happen, that the multitude remain a

multitude, and the man of genius arrives alone at the goal?

The equality of minds in their native state is as monstrous a paradox, or a term as equivocal in metaphysics, as the equality of men in the political state. Both come from the French school in evil times; and ought, therefore, as Job said, "to be eschewed." Nor can we trust to Johnson's definition of genius, "as a mind of general powers *accidentally* determined by some particular direction," as this rejects any native aptitude, while we must infer on this principle that the reasoning Locke, without an ear or an eye, could have been the musical and fairy Spenser.

The automatic theory of Reynolds stirs the puppet artist by the wires of pertinacious labour. But industry without genius is tethered; it has stimulated many drudges in art, while it has left us without a Corregio or a Raphael.

Akenside in that fine poem which is itself a history of genius, in tracing its source, first sang,

From heaven my strains begin, from heaven descends
The flame of genius to the *human breast*.

but in the final revision of that poem he left many years after, the bard has vindicated the solitary and independent origin of genius by the mysterious epithet *the chosen breast*. The veteran poet was perhaps lessoned by the vicissitudes of his own poetical life, and those of some of his brothers.

But while genius remains still wrapt up in its mysterious bud, may we not trace its history in its votaries? Let us compare although we may not always decide. If nature in some of her great operations has kept her last secrets, and even Newton, in the result of his reasonings, has religiously abstained from penetrating into her occult connections, is it nothing to be her historian, although we cannot be her legislator?

Can we trace in the faint lines of childhood, an unsteady outline of the man? In the temperament of genius may we not reasonably look for certain indications, or prognostics announcing the permanent character? Will not great sensibility be born with its susceptible organization; the deep retired character cling to its musings; and the unalterable being of intrepidity and fortitude, full of confidence, be commanding even in his sports, a daring leader among his equals?

The virtuous and contemplative Boyle imagined that he had discovered in childhood that disposition of mind which indicated an instinctive ingenuousness; an incident which he relates, evinced as he thought, that even then he preferred aggravating his fault, rather than consent to suppress any part of the truth, an effort which had been unnatural to his mind. His fanciful, yet striking illustration may open our inquiry. "This trivial passage"—the little story alluded to—"I have mentioned now, not that I think that in itself it deserves a relation, but because as the sun is seen best at his rising and his setting, so men's native dispositions are clearest perceived whilst they are children, and when they are dying. These little sudden actions are the greatest discoverers of men's true humours." That the dispositions of genius in early life pre-
sage its future character, was long the feeling of antiquity. Isocrates, after much previous observation of those who attended his lectures, would advise one to engage in political studies, exhorted another to compose history, elected some to be poets, and some to adopt his own profession. He thought that nature had some concern in forming a man of genius; and he tried to guess at her secret by detecting the first energetic

inclination of the mind. This principle guided the Jesuits.

In the old romance of King Arthur, when a cowherd comes to the king to request he would make his son a knight—"It is a great thing thou askest," said Arthur, who inquired whether this entreaty proceeded from him or his son? The old man's answer is remarkable—"Of my son, not of me; for I have thirteen sons, and all these will fall to that labour I put them; but this child will not labour for me, for any thing that I and my wife will do; but always he will be shooting and casting darts, and glad for to see battles, and to behold knights, and always day and night he desireth of me to be made a knight." The king commanded the cowherd to fetch all his sons; they were all shapen much like the poor man; but Tor was not like none of them in shape and in countenance, for he was much more than any of them. And so Artbur knighted him." This simple tale is the history of genius—the cowherd's twelve sons were like himself, but the unhappy genius in the family who perplexed and plagued the cowherd and his wife and his twelve brothers, was the youth averse to labour, but active enough in performing knightly exercises; and dreaming on chivalry amidst a herd of cows.

A man of genius is thus dropt among the people, and has first to encounter the difficulties of ordinary men deprived of that feeble ductility which adapts itself to the common destination. Parents are too often the victims of the decided propensity of a son to a Virgil or an Euclid ; and the first step into life of a man of genius is disobedience and grief. Lilly, our famous astrologer, has described the frequent situation of such a youth, like the cowherd's son who would be a knight. Lilly proposed to his father that he should try his fortune in the metropolis, where he expected that his learning and his talents would prove serviceable to him ; the father, quite incapable of discovering the latent genius of his son in his studious dispositions, very willingly consented to get rid of him, for, as Lilly proceeds, "I could not work, drive the plough, or endure any country labour ; my father oft would say I was *good for nothing*,"—words which the fathers of so many men of genius have repeated.

In reading the memoirs of a man of genius we often reprobate the domestic persecutions of those who opposed his inclinations. No poet but is moved with indignation at the recollection of the Port Royal Society thrice burning the romance which Racine at length got by heart ; no

geometrician but bitterly inveighs against the father of Pascal for not suffering him to study Euclid, which he at length understood without studying. The father of Petrarch in a barbarous rage burnt the poetical library of his son amidst the shrieks, the groans, and the tears of the youth. Yet this neither converted Petrarch into a sober lawyer, nor deprived him of the Roman laurel. The uncle of Alfieri for more than twenty years suppressed the poetical character of this noble bard; he was a poet without knowing to write a verse, and Nature, like a hard creditor, exacted with redoubled interest, all the genius which the uncle had so long kept from her. Such are the men whose inherent impulse no human opposition, and even no adverse education, can deter from being great men.

Let us, however, be just to the parents of a man of genius; they have another association of ideas concerning him than we; we see a great man, they a disobedient child; we track him through his glory, they are wearied by the sullen resistance of his character. The career of genius is rarely that of fortune or happiness; and the father, who may himself be not insensible to glory, dreads lest his son be found among that obscure multitude, that populace of mean

artists, who must expire at the barriers of mediocrity.

The contemplative race, even in their first steps towards nature, are receiving that secret instruction which no master can impart. The boy of genius flies to some favourite haunt to which his fancy has often given a name; he populates his solitude; he takes all shapes in it, he finds all places in it; he converses silently with all about him—he is a hermit, a lover, a hero. The fragrance and blush of the morning; the still hush of the evening; the mountain, the valley, and the stream; all nature opening to him, he sits brooding over his first dim images, in that train of thought we call reverie, with a restlessness of delight, for he is only the being of sensation, and has not yet learnt to think; then comes that tenderness of spirit, that first shade of thought, colouring every scene, and deepening every feeling; this temperament has been often mistaken for melancholy. One, truly inspired, unfolds the secret story—

“ Indowed with all that nature can bestow,
The child of fancy oft in silence bends
O'er the mixt treasures of his pregnant breast
With conscious pride. From them he oft resolves
To frame he knows not what excelling things,

And win he knows not what sublime reward
Of praise and wonder"—

This delight in reverie has been finely described by Boyle: "When the intermission of my studies allowed me leisure for recreation," says Boyle, "I would very often steal away from all company, and spend four or five hours alone in the fields and think at random, making my delighted imagination the busy scene where some romance or other was daily acted." This circumstance alarmed his friends, who imagined that he was overcome with melancholy.*

* An unhappy young man who recently forfeited his life to the laws for forgery appears to have given promises of genius. —He had thrown himself for two years into the studious retirement of a foreign university. Before his execution he sketched an imperfect auto-biography, and the following passage is descriptive of young genius:

"About this time I became uncommonly reserved, withdrawing by degrees from the pastimes of my associates, and was frequently observed to retire to some solitary place alone. Ruined castles, bearing the vestiges of ancient broils, and the impairing hand of time,—cascades thundering through the echoing groves,—rocks and precipices,—the beautiful as well as the sublime traits of nature—formed a spacious field for contemplation many a happy hour. From these inspiring objects, contemplation would lead me to the great Author of nature. Often have I dropped on my knees, and poured out the ecstasies of my soul to the God who inspired them."

It is remarkable that this love of repose and musing is retained throughout life. A man of fine genius is rarely enamoured of common amusements or of robust exercises; and he is usually unadroit where dexterity of hand or eye, or trivial elegancies, are required. This characteristic of genius was discovered by Horace in that Ode which school-boys often versify.* Beattie has expressly told us of his Minstrel—

“ The exploit of strength, dexterity, or speed
To him nor vanity, nor joy could bring.”

Alfieri said he could never be taught by a French dancing-master, whose Art made him at once shudder and laugh. If we reflect that as it is now practised it seems the art of giving affectation to a puppet, and that this puppet is a man we can enter into this mixed sensation of degradation and ridicule. Horace, by his own confession, was a very awkward rider; and the poetical rider could not always secure a seat on his mule; Metastasio humorously complains of his gun; the poetical sportsman could only frighten the hares and partridges; the truth was, as an elder poet sings,

“ Instead of hounds that make the wooded hills
Talk in a hundred voices to the rills,

* Hor. Od. Lib. iv. O. 3.

I like the pleasing cadence of a line
Struck by the concert of the sacred Nine."

Browne's Brit. Past. B. ii. Song 4.

And we discover the true "humour" of the indolent contemplative race in their great representatives Virgil and Horace. When they accompanied Mæcenas into the country, while the minister amused himself at tennis, the two bards reposed on a vernal bank amidst the freshness of the shade. The younger Pliny, who was so perfect a literary character, was charmed by the Roman mode of hunting, or rather fowling by nets, which admitted him to sit a whole day with his tablets and stylus, that, says he, "should I return with empty nets my tablets may at least be full." Thomson was the hero of his own Castle of Indolence.

The youth of genius will be apt to retire from the active sports of his mates. Beattie paints himself in his own Minstrel,

"Concourse and noise, and toil he ever fled,
Nor cared to mingle in the clamorous fray
Of squabbling imps; but to the forest sped."

BOSSUET would not join his young companions, and flew to his solitary task, while the classical

boys avenged his flight by applying to him from Virgil the *bos suetus aratro*, the ox daily toiling in the plough. The young painters, to ridicule the persevering labours of DOMENICHINO in his youth, honoured him by the same title of "the great ox;" and Passeri, in his delightful biography of his own contemporary artists, has happily expressed the still labours of his concealed genius, *sua taciturna lentezza*, his silent slowness. The learned HUET has given an amusing detail of the inventive persecutions of his schoolmates, to divert him from his obstinate love of study. "At length," says he, "in order to indulge my own taste, I would rise with the sun, while they were buried in sleep, and hide myself in the woods that I might read and study in quiet," but they beat the bushes and started in his burrow, the future man of erudition. SIR WILLIAM JONES was rarely a partaker in the active sports of Harrow; it was said of GRAY that he was never a boy, and the unhappy Chatterton and Burns were remarkably serious boys. MILTON has preserved for us, in solemn numbers, his school-life—

"When I was yet a child, no childish play
 To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
 Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
 What might be public good, myself I thought

Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
All righteous things—

Par. Reg.

If the youth of genius is apt to retire from the ordinary sports of his mates, he often substitutes others, the reflections of those favourite studies which are haunting his young imagination; the amusements of such an idler have often been fanciful. ARIOSTO, while yet a school-boy, composed a sort of tragedy from the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, and had it represented by his brothers and sisters. POPE seems to have indicated his passion for Homer in those rough scenes which he drew up from Ogilby's version; and when Sir WILLIAM JONES at Harrow divided the fields according to a map of Greece, and portioned out to each school-fellow a dominion, and further, when wanting a copy of the Tempest to act from, he supplied it from his memory, we must confess that the boy JONES was reflecting in his amusements the cast of mind he displayed in his after-life, and that felicity of memory and taste so prevalent in his literary character. FLORIAN's earliest years were passed in shooting birds all day and reading every evening an old translation of the Iliad; whenever he got a bird remarkable for its size or its plumage,

he personified it by one of the names of his heroes, and raising a funeral pyre consumed the body; collecting the ashes in an urn, he presented them to his grandfather, with a narrative of his Patroclus or Sarpedon. We seem here to detect, reflected in his boyish sports, the pleasing genius of the author of Numa Pompilius, Gonsalvo of Cordova and William Tell.

It is perhaps a criterion of talent when a youth is distinguished by his equals; at that moment of life with no flattery on the one side, and no artifice on the other, all emotion and no reflection, the boy who has obtained a predominance has acquired this merely by native powers. The boyhood of NELSON was characterized by events congenial to those of his after-days; and his father understood his character when he declared that "in whatever station he might be placed, he would climb, if possible, to the top of the tree." Some puerile anecdotes which Franklin remembered of himself, in association with his after-life, betray the invention, and the firm intrepidity, of his character; and even perhaps the carelessness of the means to obtain his purpose. In boyhood he was a sort of adventurer; and since his father would not consent to a sea-life, he made the river near him repre-

sent the ocean; he lived on the water, and was the daring Columbus of a school-boy's boat. A part where he and his mates stood to angle, in time became a quagmire. In the course of one day the infant projector thought of a wharf for them to stand on, and raised with a heap of stones deposited there for the building of a house. But he preferred his wharf to another's house; his contrivances to aid his puny labourers, with his resolution not to quit the great work till it was effected, seem to strike out to us the decision and invention of his future character. But the qualities which attract the companions of a school-boy may not be those which are essential to fine genius. The captain or leader of his school-mates has a claim on our attention, but it is the sequestered boy who may chance to be the artist, or the literary character.

Is there then a period in youth which yields decisive marks of the character of genius? The natures of men are as various as their fortunes. Some, like diamonds, must wait to receive their splendour from the slow touches of the polisher, while others, resembling pearls, appear at once born with their beautiful lustre.

Among the inauspicious circumstances is the feebleness of the first attempts; and we must not decide on the talents of a young man by his first works. Dryden and Swift might have been deterred from authorship, had their earliest pieces decided their fate. Racine's earliest composition, which we know of by some fragments his son has preserved, to show their remarkable contrast with his writings, abound with those points and conceits which afterwards he abhorred; the tender author of *Andromache* could not have been discovered while exhausting himself in his wanderings from nature, in running after conceits as absurd and surprizing as the worst parts of Cowley. Gibbon betrayed none of the force and magnitude of his powers in his "Essay on Literature," or his attempted History of Switzerland. Johnson's cadenced prose is not recognizable in the humble simplicity of his earliest years. Many authors have begun unsuccessfully the walk they afterwards excelled in. Raphaël, when he first drew his meagre forms under Perugino, had not yet conceived one line of that ideal beauty, which one day he of all men could alone execute.

Even the manhood of genius may pass by unobserved by his companions, and may, like *Æneas*,

be hidden in a cloud amidst his associates. The celebrated Fabius Maximus in his boyhood was called in derision "the little sheep," from the meekness and gravity of his disposition. His sedateness and taciturnity, his indifference to juvenile amusements, his slowness and difficulty in learning, and his ready submission to his equals, induced them to consider him as one irrecoverably stupid. That greatness of mind, unalterable courage, and invincible character Fabius afterwards displayed, they then imagined had lain concealed in the apparent contrary qualities. The boy of genius may indeed seem slow and dull even to the phlegmatic, for thoughtful and observing dispositions conceal themselves in timorous silent characters, who have not yet learnt their strength; nor can that assiduous love, which cannot tear itself away from the secret instruction it is perpetually imbibing, be easily distinguished from that pertinacity which goes on with the mere plodder. We often hear from the early companions of a man of genius that at school, he had appeared heavy and unpromising. Rousseau imagined that the childhood of some men is accompanied by that seeming and deceitful dullness, which is the sign of a profound genius; and Roger Ascham has placed among "the best natures for learning, the sad-natured and hard-wit-

ted child," that is, the thoughtful or the melancholic, and the slow. Domenichino was at first heavy and unpromising, and Passeri expresses his surprize at the accounts he received of the early life of this great artist. "It is difficult to believe," he says, "what many assert, that from the beginning this great painter had a ruggedness about him, which entirely incapacitated him from learning his profession, and they have heard from himself that he quite despaired of success. Yet I cannot comprehend how such vivacious talents, with a mind so finely organised, and accompanied with such favourable dispositions for the art, would show such signs of utter incapacity; I rather think that it is a mistake in the proper knowledge of genius, which some imagine indicates itself most decisively by its sudden vehemence, showing itself like lightning, and like lightning passing away." A parallel case we find in Goldsmith, who passed through an unpromising youth; he declared that he was never attached to the belles lettres till he was thirty, that poetry had no peculiar charms for him till that age, and indeed to his latest hour he was surprizing his friends by productions which they had imagined he was incapable of composing. Hume was considered, for his sobriety and assiduity, as competent to become a steady merchant; of Johnson it was said

that he would never offend in conversation, as of Boileau that he had no great understanding, but would speak ill of no one. Farquhar at college was a heavy companion, and afterwards, combined, with great knowledge of the world, a light airy talent. Even a discerning parent or master has entirely failed to develop the genius of the youth, who has afterwards ranked among eminent men; and we ought as little to infer from early unfavourable appearances as from inequality of talent. The great Isaac Barrow's father used to say, that if it pleased God to take from him any of his children he hoped it might be Isaac, as the least promising; and during the three years Barrow passed at the Charter-house, he was remarkable only for the utter negligence of his studies and his person. The mother of Sheridan, herself a literary female, pronounced early, that he was the dullest and most hopeless of her sons. Bodmer, at the head of the literary class in Switzerland, who had so frequently discovered and animated the literary youths of his country, could never detect the latent genius of Gesner; after a repeated examination of the young man, he put his parents in despair with the hopeless award that a mind of so ordinary a cast must confine itself to mere writing and accounts.

Thus it happens that the first years of life do not always include those of genius, and the education of the youth may not be the education of his genius. In all these cases nature had dropt the seeds in the soil, but even a happy disposition must be concealed amidst adverse circumstances. It has happened to some men of genius during a long period of their lives, that an unsettled impulse, without having discovered the object of its aptitude, a thirst and fever in the temperament of too sentient a being which cannot find the occupation to which it can only attach itself, has sunk into a melancholy and querulous spirit, weary with the burthen of existence; but the instant the latent talent had declared itself, his first work, the eager offspring of desire and love, has astonished the world at once with the birth and the maturity of genius.

Abundant facts exhibit genius unequivocally discovering itself in the juvenile age, connecting these facts with the subsequent life—and in general, perhaps a master-mind exhibits precocity. “Whatever a young man at first applies himself to, is commonly his delight afterwards.” This remark was made by Hartley, who has related an anecdote of the infancy of his genius, which indicated the man. He declared to his daughter

that the intention of writing a book upon the nature of man was conceived in his mind when he was a very little boy—when swinging backwards and forwards upon a gate, not more than nine or ten years old; he was then meditating upon the nature of his own mind, how man was made, and for what future end—such was the true origin, in a boy of ten years old, of his celebrated book on the “frame, the duty and the expectation of man.” The constitutional propensity has declared itself in painters and poets, who were such before they understood the nature of colours and the arts of verse. The vehement passion of Peiresc for knowledge, according to accounts Gassendi had received from old men who had known him a child, broke out as soon as he had been taught his alphabet; his delight was to be handling books and papers, and his perpetual inquiries after their contents obliged them to invent something to quiet the child’s insatiable curiosity, who was offended if told he had not the capacity to understand them. He did not study like ordinary scholars, and would read neither Justin nor Ovid without a perpetual consultation of other authors, such was his early love of research! At ten years of age his taste for the studies of antiquity was kindled at the sight of some ancient coins dug up in his neighbourhood; and then that

passion for knowledge "began to burn like fire in a forest," as Gassendi most happily describes the fervour and the amplitude of his mind. We have Boccaccio's own words for a proof of his early natural tendency to tale-writing, in a passage of his genealogy of the Gods: "Before seven years of age, when as yet I had met with no stories, was without a master and hardly knew my letters, I had a natural talent for fiction, and produced some little tales." Thus the Decamerone was appearing much earlier than we suppose. So Ariosto, as soon as he obtained some knowledge of languages, delighted himself in translating French and Spanish romances; was he not sowing plentifully the seeds of his Orlando Furioso? Lope de Vega declares that he was a poet from the cradle, beginning to make verses before he could write them, for he bribed his school-mates with a morsel of his breakfast to write down the lines he composed in the early morning. Descartes, while yet a boy, was so marked out by habits of deep meditation, that he went among his companions by the title of the philosopher, always questioning, and settling cause and effect. It happened that he was twenty-five years of age before he left the army, but the propensity for meditation had been early formed, and the noble enterprize of reforming philosophy never ceased

to inspire his solitary thoughts. Descartes was a man born only for meditation—and he has himself given a very interesting account of the pursuits which occupied his youth, and of the progress of his genius; of that secret struggle he so long held with himself, wandering in concealment over the world, for more than twenty years, and, as he says of himself, like the statuary, labouring to draw out a Minerva from the marble block. Michael Angelo, as yet a child, wherever he went, busied himself in drawing; and when his noble parents, hurt that a man of genius was disturbing the line of their ancestry, forced him to relinquish the pencil, the infant artist flew to the chissel: art was in his soul and his hands. Velasquez, the Spanish painter, at his school-tasks, filled them with sketches and drawings, and as some write their names on their books, his were known by the specimens of his genius. The painter Lanfranco was originally the page of a marquis, who observing that he was perpetually scrawling figures on cards, or with charcoal on the walls, asked the boy whether he would apply to the art he seemed to love? The boy trembled, fearing to have incurred his master's anger; but when encouraged to decide, he did not hesitate: placed under one of the Carraccios, his rapid progress in the art testified how much Lanfranco had suffered by sup-

pressing his natural aptitude. When we find the boy Nanteuil, his parents being averse to their son's practising drawing, hiding himself in a tree to pursue the delightful exercise of his pencil ; that Handel, intended for a doctor of the civil laws, and whom no parental discouragement could deprive of his enthusiasm for the musical science, for ever touching harpsichords, and having secretly conveyed a musical instrument to a retired apartment, sitting through the night awakening his harmonious spirit ; and when we view Ferguson, the child of a peasant, acquiring the art of reading without any one suspecting it, by listening to his father teaching his brother ; making a wooden watch without the slightest knowledge of mechanism, and while a shepherd, like an ancient Chaldean, studying the phenomena of the heavens and making a celestial globe, as he had made a wooden watch, can we hesitate to believe that in such minds, there was a resistless and mysterious propensity, growing up with the temperament of these artists ? Ferguson was a shepherd-lad on a plain, placed entirely out of the chance of imitation ; or of the influence of casual excitement ; or any other of those sources of genius so frequently assigned for its production. The case of Opie is similar.

Yet these cases are not more striking than one related of the Abbé La Caille, who ranked among the first astronomers of the age. La Caille was the son of the parish clerk of a village; at the age of ten years his father sent him every evening to ring the church bell, but the boy always returned home late. His father was angry and beat him, and still the boy returned an hour after he had rung the bell. The father, suspecting something mysterious in his conduct, one evening watched him. He saw his son ascend the steeple, ring the bell as usual, and remain there during an hour. When the unlucky boy descended, he trembled like one caught in the fact, and on his knees confessed that the pleasure he took in watching the stars from the steeple was the real cause of detaining him from home. As the father was not born to be an astronomer, like the son, he flogged the boy severely. The youth was found weeping in the streets, by a man of science, who, when he discovered in a boy of ten years of age, a passion for contemplating the stars at night, and who had discovered an observatory in a steeple, in spite of such ill-treatment, he decided that the seal of nature had impressed itself on the genius of that boy.—Relieving the parent from the son and the son from the parent, he assisted the young La Caille in his passionate

pursuit, and the event completely justified the prediction. Let others tell us why children feel a predisposition for the studies of astronomy, or natural history, or any similar pursuit. We know that youths have found themselves in parallel situations with Ferguson and La Caille, without experiencing their energies.

The case of Clairon, the great French tragic actress, deserves attention: she seems to have been an actress before she saw a theatre. This female, destined to be a sublime actress, was of the lowest extraction; the daughter of a violent and illiterate woman, who with blows and menaces was driving about the child all day to manual labour. "I know not," says Clairon, "whence I derived my disgust, but I could not bear the idea to be a mere workman, or to remain inactive in a corner." In her eleventh year, being locked up in a room, as a punishment, with the windows fastened, she climbed upon a chair to look about her. A new object instantly absorbed her attention; in the house opposite she observed a celebrated actress amidst her family, her daughter was performing her dancing lesson; the girl Clairon, the future Melpomene, was struck by the influence of this graceful and affectionate scene. "All my little being collect-

ed itself into my eyes; I lost not a single motion; as soon as the lesson ended all the family applauded and the mother embraced the daughter.— That difference of her fate and mine filled me with profound grief, my tears hindered me from seeing any longer, and when the palpitations of my heart allowed me to reascend the chair, all had disappeared.” This was a discovery; from that moment she knew no rest; she rejoiced when she could get her mother to confine her in that room. The happy girl was a divinity to the unhappy one, whose susceptible genius imitated her in every gesture and motion; and Clairon soon showed the effect of her ardent studies, for she betrayed all the graces she had taught herself, in the common intercourse of life; she charmed her friends and even softened her barbarous mother; in a word, she was an actress without knowing what an actress was.

In this case of the youth of genius, are we to conclude that the accidental view of a young actress practising her studies, imparted the character of the great tragic actress Clairon? Could a mere chance occurrence have given birth to those faculties which produced a sublime tragedian? In all arts there are talents which may be acquired by imitation, and reflection; and thus far may

genius be educated, but there are others which are entirely the result of native sensibility, which often secretly torment the possessor, and which may even be lost from the want of development; a state of languor from which many have not recovered. Clairon, before she saw the young actress, and having yet no conception of a theatre, never having entered one, had in her soul that latent faculty which creates a genius of her cast. "Had I not felt like Dido," she once exclaimed, "I could not have thus personified her!"

Some of these facts, we conceive, afford decisive evidence of that instinct in genius, that constitutional propensity in the mind, sometimes called organization, which has inflamed such a war of words by its equivocal term and the ambiguity of its nature; it exists independent of education, and where it is wanting, education can never confer it. Of its mysterious influence we may be ignorant; the effect is more apparent than the cause. It is, however, always working in the character of the chosen mind. In the history of genius, there are unquestionably many secondary causes of considerable influence in developing or even crushing the germ—these have been of late often detected, and sometimes

carried even to a ridiculous extreme ; but among them none seem more remarkable than the first studies and the first habits.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST STUDIES.

THE first studies form an epoch in the history of genius, and unquestionably have sensibly influenced its productions. Often have the first impressions stamped a character on the mind adapted to receive one, as often the first step into life has determined its walk. To ourselves, this is a distant period lost in the horizon of our own recollection, and so unobserved by others, that it passes away in neglect.

Many of those peculiarities of men of genius which are not fortunate, and some which have hardened the character in its mould, may be traced to this period. Physicians tell us that there is a certain point in youth at which the constitution is formed, and on which the sanity of life revolves; the character of genius experiences a similar dangerous period. Early bad

tastes, early particular habits, early defective instructions, all the egotistical pride of an untamed intellect, are those evil spirits which will dog genius, to its grave. An early attachment to the works of Sir Thomas Browne produced in Johnson an excessive admiration of that latinised English, which violated the native graces of the language. The first studies of Rembrandt affected his after-labours; that peculiarity of shadow which marks all his pictures originated in the circumstance of his father's mill receiving light from an aperture at the top, which habituated that artist afterwards to view all objects as if seen in that magical light. When Pope was a child he found in his mother's closet a small library of mystical devotion; but it was not suspected till the fact was discovered, that the effusions of love and religion poured forth in his *Eloisa* were derived from the seraphic raptures of those erotic mystics, who to the last retained a place in his library among the classical bards of antiquity. The accidental perusal of *Quintus Curtius* first made Boyle "in love with other than pedantic books, and conjured up in him," as he expresses it, "an unsatisfied appetite of knowledge; so that he thought he owed more to *Quintus Curtius* than did *Alexander*." From the perusal of *Rycaut's*

folio of Turkish history in childhood, the noble and impassioned bard of our times retained those indelible impressions, which gave life and motion to the "Giaour," the "Corsair," and "Alp." A voyage to the country produced the scenery. Rycaut only communicated the impulse to a mind susceptible of the poetical character; and without this Turkish history we should still have had our poet.

The influence of first studies, in the formation of the character of genius, is a moral phenomenon, which has not sufficiently attracted our notice. Dr. Franklin acquaints us that when young and wanting books, he accidentally found De Foe's "Essay on Projects," from which work impressions were derived which afterwards influenced some of the principal events of his life. Rousseau, in early youth, full of his Plutarch, while he was also devouring the trash of romances, could only conceive human nature in the colossal forms, or be affected by the infirm sensibility, of an imagination mastering all his faculties; thinking like a Roman, and feeling like a Sybarite. The same circumstance happened to Catharine Macauley, who herself has told us how she owed the bent of her character to the early reading of the Roman historians: but

combining Roman admiration with English faction, she violated truth in her English characters, and exaggerated romance in the Roman. But the permanent effect of a solitary bias in the youth of genius, impelling the whole current of his after-life, is strikingly displayed in the remarkable character of Archdeacon Blackburne, the author of the famous "Confessional," and the curious "Memoirs of Hollis," written with such a republican fierceness.

I had long considered the character of our archdeacon as a *lusus politico et theologico*. Having subscribed to the Articles and enjoying the archdeaconry, he was writing against subscription and the whole hierarchy, with a spirit so irascible and caustic, as if, like Prynne and Bastwick, the archdeacon had already lost both his ears; while his antipathy to monarchy might have done honour to a Roundhead of the Rota Club. The secret of these volcanic explosions was only revealed in a letter accidentally preserved. In the youth of our spirited archdeacon, when fox-hunting was his deepest study, it happened at the house of a relation, that on some rainy day, among other garret lumber, he fell on some worm eaten volumes which had once been the careful collections of his greatgrand-

father, an Oliverian justice. "These," says he, "I conveyed to my lodging-room, and there became acquainted with the manners and principles of many excellent old puritans, and then laid the foundation of my own." Thus is the enigma solved! Archdeacon Blackburne, in his seclusion in Yorkshire amidst the Oliverian justice's library, shows that we are in want of a Cervantes, but not of a Quixote, and Yorkshire might yet be as renowned a county as La Mancha; for political romances, it is presumed, may be as fertile of ridicule as any of the folios of chivalry.

Such is the influence through life of those first unobserved impressions on the character of genius, which every author has not recorded.

Education, however indispensable in a cultivated age, produces nothing on the side of genius, and where education ends often genius begins. Gray was asked if he recollected when he first felt the strong predilection to poetry; he replied, that "he believed it was when he began to read Virgil for his own amusement, and not in school hours as a task." Such is the force of self-education in genius, that the celebrated physiologist, John Hunter, who was entirely self-educated,

evinced such penetration in his anatomical discoveries, that his sensible biographer observes,—“ he has brought into notice passages from writers he was unable to read, and which had been overlooked by profound scholars.”*

That the education of genius must be its own work, we may appeal to every one of the family ; it is not always fortunate, for many die amidst a waste of talents and the wrecks of their mind.

Many a soul sublime
Has felt the influence of malignant star.

Beattie.

An unfavourable position in society is an usual obstruction in the course of this self-education ; and a man of genius, through half his life, has held a contest with a bad, or with no education. There is a race of the late-taught, who, with a capacity of leading in the first rank, are mortified to discover themselves only on a level with their contemporaries. Winkelman, who passed his youth in obscure misery, as a village schoolmaster, paints feelings which strikingly contrast with his

* Life of John Hunter, by Dr. Adams, p. 59, where the case is curiously illustrated.

avocations. "I formerly filled the office of a schoolmaster with the greatest punctuality, and I taught the A, B, C, to children with filthy heads; at the moment, I was aspiring after the knowledge of the beautiful, and meditating, low to myself, on the similes of Homer; then I said to myself, as I still say, 'Peace, my soul, thy strength shall surmount thy cares.'" The obstructions of so unhappy a self-education essentially injured his ardent genius; and his secret sorrow was long, at this want of early patronage and these discordant habits of life. "I am unfortunately one of those whom the Greeks named *οπισμαβεις*; *sero sapientes*, the late-learned, for I have appeared too late in the world and in Italy. To have done something, it was necessary that I should have had an education analogous to my pursuits, and this at your age." This class of the late-learned, which Winkelman notices, is a useful distinction; it is so with a sister-art: one of the greatest musicians of our country assures me, that the ear is as latent with many; there are the late-learned even in the musical world. Budæus declared he was both "self-taught and late-taught."

The self-educated are marked by strong peculiarities. If their minds are rich in acquisition,

they often want taste, and the art of communication; their knowledge, like corn heaped in a granary, for want of ventilation and stirring, perishes in its own masses. They may abound with talent in all shapes, but rarely in its place, and they have to dread a plethora of genius, and a delirium of wit. They sometimes improve amazingly; their source, turbid and obscure, works itself clear at last, and the stream runs and even sparkles. These men at first were pushed on by their native energy; at length, they obtain the secret to conduct their genius, which before had conducted them. Sometimes the greater portion of their lives is passed before they can throw themselves out of that world of mediocrity to which they had been confined; their first work has not announced genius, and their last is stamped with it. Men are long judged by their first work: it takes a long while after they have surpassed themselves before it is discovered. This race of the self-educated are apt to consider some of their own insulated feelings those of all; their prejudices are often invincible, and their tastes unsure and capricious; glorying in their strength, while they are betraying their weaknesses, yet mighty even in that enthusiasm which is only disciplined by its own fierce habits. Bunyan is the

Spenser of the people. The fire burned towards heaven, although the altar was rude and rustic.

Barry, the painter, has left behind him works not to be turned over by the connoisseur by rote, nor the artist who dares not be just and will not suffer even the infirmities of genius to be buried in its grave. That enthusiast, with a temper of mind resembling Rousseau's, the same creature of imagination, consumed by the same passions, with the same fine intellect disordered, and the same fortitude of soul, found his self-taught pen, like his pencil, betray his genius. A vehement enthusiasm breaks through his ill-composed works, throwing the sparks of his bold and rich conceptions, so philosophical and magnificent, into the soul of the youth of genius. When in his character of professor, he delivered his lectures at the academy, he never ceased speaking but his auditors rose in a tumult, while their hands returned to him the proud feelings he adored. The self-educated and gifted man, once listening to the children of genius, whom he had created about him, exclaimed, "Go it, go it, my boys! they did so at Athens." Thus high could he throw up his native mud into the very heaven of his invention!

But even the pages of Barry are the aliment of young genius : before we can discern the beautiful, must we not be endowed with the susceptibility of love ? Must not the disposition be formed before even the object appears ? The uneducated Barry is the higher priest of enthusiasm than the educated Reynolds. I have witnessed the young artist of genius glow and start over the reveries of Barry, but pause and meditate, and inquire over the mature elegance of Reynolds ; in the one, he caught the passion for beauty, and in the other, he discovered the beautiful ; with the one he was warm and restless, and with the other calm and satisfied.

Of the difficulties overcome in the self-education of genius, we have a remarkable instance in the character of Moses Mendelsohn, on whom literary Germany has bestowed the honourable title of the Jewish Socrates.* Such were the ap-

* I composed the life of Mendelsohn so far back as in 17 , for a periodical publication, whence our late biographers have drawn their notices ; a juvenile production, which happened to excite the attention of the late BARRY, then not personally known to me, and he has given all the immortality his poetical pencil could bestow on this man of genius, by immediately placing in his elysium of genius, Moses Mendelsohn shaking hands with ADDISON, who wrote on the truth of the Christian religion, and near LOCKE, the English master of Mendelsohn's mind.

parent invincible obstructions which barred out Mendelsohn from the world of literature and philosophy, that, in the history of men of genius, it is something like taking in the history of man, the savage of Aveyron from his woods,—who, destitute of a human language, should at length create a model of eloquence ; without a faculty of conceiving a figure, should be capable to add to the demonstrations of Euclid ; and without a complex idea and with few sensations, should at length, in the sublimest strain of metaphysics, open to the world a new view of the immortality of the soul !

Mendelsohn, the son of a poor rabbin, in a village in Germany, received an education completely rabbinical, and its nature must be comprehended, or the term of education would be misunderstood. The Israelites in Poland and Germany live, with all the restrictions of their ceremonial law, in an insulated state, and are not always instructed in the language of the country of their birth. They employ for their common intercourse a barbarous or *patois* Hebrew, while the sole studies of the young rabbins are strictly confined to the Talmud, of which the fundamental principle, like the Sonna of the Turks, is a pious rejection of every species of uninspired

learning. This ancient jealous spirit, which walls in the understanding and the faith of man, was shutting out what the imitative Catholics afterwards called heresy. It is, then, these numerous folios of the Talmud which the true Hebraic student contemplates through all the seasons of life, as the Patuecos in their low valley imagine their surrounding mountains to be the confines of the universe.

Of such a nature was the plan of MENDELSON'S first studies; but even in his boyhood this conflict of study occasioned an agitation of his spirits, which affected his life ever after; rejecting the Talmudical dreamers he caught a nobler spirit from the celebrated Maimonides; and his native sagacity was already clearing up the darkness around. An enemy not less hostile to the enlargement of mind than voluminous legends, presented itself in the indigence of his father, who was now compelled to send away the youth on foot to Berlin to find labour and bread.

At Berlin he becomes an amanuensis to another poor rabbin, who could only still initiate him into the theology, the jurisprudence and scholastic philosophy of his people. Thus he was no farther advanced in that philosophy of the mind in

which he was one day to be the rival of Plato and Locke, nor in that knowledge of literature of which he was to be among the first polished critics of Germany.

Some unexpected event occurs which gives the first great impulse to the mind of genius. MENDELSON received this from the first companion of his misery and his studies, a man of congenial, but maturer powers. He was a Polish Jew, expelled from the communion of the Orthodox, and the calumniated student was now a vagrant, with more sensibility than fortitude. But this vagrant was a philosopher, a poet, a naturalist and a mathematician. MENDELSON, at a distant day, never alluded to him without tears. Thrown together into the same situation, they approached each other by the same sympathies, and communicating in the only language which MENDELSON knew, the Polander voluntarily undertook his literary education.

Then was seen one of the most extraordinary spectacles in the history of modern literature. Two houseless Hebrew youths might be discovered, in the moonlight streets of Berlin, sitting in retired corners, or on the steps of some porch, the one instructing the other, with an Euclid in his hand; but what is more extraordinary, it was

a Hebrew version, composed by himself, for one who knew no other language. Who could then have imagined that the future Plato of Germany was sitting on those steps !

The Polander, whose deep melancholy had settled on his heart, died—yet he had not lived in vain, since the electric spark that lighted up the soul of MENDELSON had fallen from his own.

MENDELSON was now left alone ; his mind teeming with its chaos, and still master of no other language than that barren idiom which was incapable of expressing the ideas he was meditating on. He had scarcely made a step into the philosophy of his age, and the genius of MENDELSON had probably been lost to Germany had not the singularity of his studies and the cast of his mind been detected by the sagacity of Dr. Kisch. The aid of this physician was momentous ; for he devoted several hours every day to the instruction of a poor youth, whose strong capacity he had the discernment to perceive, and the generous temper to aid. MENDELSON was soon enabled to read Locke in a Latin version, but with such extreme pain, that, compelled to search for every word, and to arrange their Latin order, and at the same time to combine metaphysical ideas, it

was observed that he did not so much translate, as guess by the force of meditation.

This prodigious effort of his intellect retarded his progress, but invigorated his habit, as the racer, by running against the hill, at length courses with facility.

A succeeding effort was to master the living languages, and chiefly the English, that he might read his favourite Locke in his own idiom. Thus a great genius for metaphysics and languages was forming itself by itself.

It is curious to detect, in the character of genius, the effects of local and moral influences. There resulted from MENDELSONN'S early situation, certain defects in his intellectual character, derived from his poverty, his Jewish education, and his numerous impediments in literature. Inheriting but one language, too obsolete and naked to serve the purposes of modern philosophy, he perhaps overvalued his new acquisitions, and in his delight of knowing many languages, he with difficulty escaped from remaining a mere philologist; while in his philosophy, having adopted the prevailing principles of Wolf and Baumgarten, his genius was long without the courage or the

skill to emancipate itself from their rusty chains. It was more than a step which had brought him into their circle, but a step was yet wanted to escape from it.

At length the mind of MENDELSON enlarged in literary intercourse: he became a great and original thinker in many beautiful speculations in moral and critical philosophy; while he had gradually been creating a style which the critics of Germany have declared was their first luminous model of precision and elegance.— Thus a Hebrew vagrant, first perplexed in the voluminous labyrinth of Judaical learning, in his middle age oppressed by indigence and malady, and in his mature life wrestling with that commercial station whence he derived his humble independence, became one of the masterwriters in the literature of his country. The history of the mind of Mendelsohn is one of the noblest pictures of the self-education of genius.

Friends, who are so valuable in our youth, are usually prejudicial in the youth of genius. Peculiar and unfortunate is this state, which is put in danger from what in every other it derives security. The greater part of the multitude of authors and artists originate in the ignorant admiration of their early friends; while

the real genius has often been disconcerted and thrown into despair, by the ill judgments of his domestic circle. The productions of taste are more unfortunate than those which depend on a chain of reasoning, or the detail of facts; these are more palpable to the common judgments of men; but taste is of such rarity, that a long life may be passed by some without once obtaining a familiar acquaintance with a mind so cultivated by knowledge, so tried by experience, and so practised by converse with the literary world that its prophetic feeling anticipates the public opinion. When a young writer's first essay is shown, some, through mere inability of censure, see nothing but beauties; others, with equal imbecility, can see none; and others, out of pure malice, see nothing but faults. "I was soon disgusted," says Gibbon, "with the modest practice of reading the manuscript to my friends. Of such friends some will praise for politeness, and some will criticise for vanity." Had several of our first writers set their fortunes on the cast of their friends' opinions, we might have lost some precious compositions. The friends of Thomson discovered nothing but faults in his early productions, one of which happened to be his noblest, the "Winter;" they just could discern that these abounded with

luxuriances, without being aware that they were the luxuriances of a poet. He had created a new school in art—and appealed from his circle to the public. From a manuscript letter of our poet's, written when employed on his "Summer," I transcribe his sentiments on his former literary friends in Scotland—he is writing to Mallet :* "Far from defending these two lines, I damn them to the lowest depth of the poetical Tophet, prepared of old, for Mitchell, Morrice, Rook, Cook, Beckingham, and a long &c. Wherever I have evidence, or think I have evidence, which is the same thing, I'll be as obstinate as all the mules in Persia." This poet, of warm affections, so irritably felt the perverse criticisms of his learned friends, that they were to share alike, nothing less than a damnation to a poetical hell. One of these "blasts" broke out in a vindictive epigram on Mitchell, whom he describes with a "blasted eye;" but this critic having one literally, the poet, to avoid a personal reflection, could only consent to make the blemish more active—

"Why all not faults, injurious Mitchell! why
Appears one beauty to thy *blasting* eye?"

* In Mr. Murray's collection of autographical letters.

He again calls him "the planet-blasted Mitchell." Of another of these critical friends he speaks with more sedateness, but with a strong conviction that the critic, a very sensible man, had no sympathy with his poet. "Aikman's reflections on my writings are very good, but he does not in them regard the turn of my genius enough; should I alter my way I would write poorly. I must choose what appears to me the most significant epithet, or I cannot, with any heart, proceed." The "Mirror," when published in Edinburgh, was "fastidiously" received, as all "home-productions" are; but London avenged the cause of the author. When Swift introduced Parnel to Lord Bolingbroke, and to the world, he observes, in his Journal "it is pleasant to see one who hardly passed for any thing in Ireland, make his way here with a little friendly forwarding." There is nothing more trying to the judgment of the friends of a young man of genius, than the invention of a new manner; without a standard to appeal to, without bladders to swim, the ordinary critic sinks into irretrievable distress; but usually pronounces against novelty. When Reynolds returned from Italy, warm with all the excellence of his art, says Mr. Northcote, and painted a portrait, his old master, Hudson, viewing it, and perceiving no trace of his own manner,

exclaimed that he did not paint so well as when he left England; while another, who conceived no higher excellence than Kneller, treated with signal contempt the future Raphael of England.

If it be dangerous for a young writer to resign himself to the opinions of his friends, he also incurs some peril in passing them with inattention. What an embarrassment! He wants a Quintilian. One great means to obtain such an invaluable critic, is the cultivation of his own judgment, in a round of meditation and reading; let him at once supply the marble and be himself the sculptor: let the great authors of the world be his gospels, and the best critics their expounders; from the one he will draw inspiration, and from the others he will supply those tardy discoveries in art, which he who solely depends on his own experience may obtain too late in life. Those who do not read criticism will not even merit to be criticised. The more extensive an author's knowledge of what has been done, the greater will be his powers in knowing what to do. Let him preserve his juvenile compositions,—whatever these may be, they are the spontaneous growth, and, like the plants of the Alps, not always found in other soils; they are his virgin fancies; by contemplat-

ing them, he may detect some of his predominant habits,—resume an old manner more happily,—invent novelty from an old subject he had so rudely designed,—and often may steal from himself something so fine that, when thrown into his most finished compositions, it may seem a happiness rather than art. A young writer, in the progress of his studies, should often recollect a fanciful simile of Dryden.—

“ As those who unripe veins in mines explore,
On the rich bed again the warm turf lay;
Till time digests the yet imperfect ore,
And know it will be Gold another day.”

Ingenious youth! if, in a constant perusal of the master-writers, you see your own sentiments anticipated, and in the tumult of your mind as it comes in contact with theirs, new ones arise; if in meditating on the Confessions of Rousseau, or on those of every man of genius, for they have all their confessions, you recollect that you have experienced the same sensations from the same circumstances, and that you have encountered the same difficulties and overcome them by the same means, then let not your courage be lost in your admiration,—but listen to that “still small voice” in your heart, which

cries with Correggio and with Montesquieu,
"Ed io anche son Pittore!"*

* This noble consciousness with which the Italian painter gave utterance to his strong feelings on viewing a celebrated picture by one of his rivals, is applied by Montesquieu to himself at the close of the preface to his great work.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE IRRITABILITY OF GENIUS.

THE modes of life of a man of genius, often tinged by eccentricity and enthusiasm, are in an eternal conflict with the monotonous and imitative habits of society, as society is carried on in a great metropolis,—where men are necessarily alike, and in perpetual intercourse, shaping themselves to one another.

The occupations, the amusements, and the ardour of the man of genius, are discordant with the artificial habits of life ; in the vortexes of business or the world of pleasure, crowds of human beings are only treading in one another's steps ; the pleasures and the sorrows of this active multitude are not his, while his are not obvious to them : Genius in society is therefore often in a state of suffering. Professional characters, who are themselves so often literary, yielding to their

predominant interests, conform to that assumed urbanity which levels them with ordinary minds; but the man of genius cannot leave himself behind in the cabinet he quits; the train of his thoughts is not stopt at will, and in the range of conversation the habits of his mind will prevail; an excited imagination, a high toned feeling, a wandering reverie, a restlessness of temper, are perpetually carrying him out of the processional line of the mere conversationists. He is, like all solitary beings, much too sentient, and prepares for defence even at a random touch. His emotions are rapid, his generalizing views take things only in masses, while he treats with levity some useful prejudices; he interrogates, he doubts, he is caustic; in a word, he thinks he converses, while he is at his studies. Sometimes, apparently a complacent listener, we are mortified by detecting the absent man; now he appears humbled and spiritless, ruminating over some failure which probably may be only known to himself, and now haughty and hardy for a triumph he has obtained, which yet remains as secret to the world. He is sometimes insolent, and sometimes querulous. He is stung by jealousy; or he writhes in aversion; his eyes kindle, and his teeth gnash; a fever shakes his spirit; a fever which has sometimes generated a disease,

and has even produced a slight perturbation of the faculties.*

Once we were nearly receiving from the hand of genius itself, the most curious sketches of the temper, the irascible humours, the delicacy of soul even to its shadowiness, from the warm *sbozzos* of Burns when he began a diary of the heart, —a narrative of characters and events, and a chronology of his emotions. It was natural for such a creature of sensation and passion to project such a regular task; but quite impossible to get through it. The paper-book that he conceived would have recorded all these things, therefore turns out but a very imperfect document. Even that little it was not thought proper to give entire. Yet there we view a warm original mind, when he first step into the polished circles of society, discovering that he could no longer “pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved

* I have given a history of *Literary Quarrels from personal motives*, in *Quarrels of Authors*, vol. iii. p. 285. There we find how many controversies, in which the public get involved, have sprung from some sudden squabble, some neglect of petty civility, some unlucky epithet, or some casual observation dropped without much consideration, which mortified or enraged an author. See further symptoms of this disease, at the close of the chapter on “Self-praise,” in the present work.

confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence." This was the first lesson he learnt at Edinburgh, and it was as a substitute for such a human being, that he bought a paper-book to keep under lock and key; a security at least equal, says he, "to the bosom of any friend whatever." Let the man of genius pause over the fragments of this "paper-book;" it will instruct as much as any open confession of a criminal at the moment he is to suffer. No man was more afflicted with that miserable pride, the infirmity of men of imagination, which exacts from its best friends a perpetual reverence and acknowledgment of its powers. Our Poet, with all his gratitude and veneration for "the noble Glencairn," was "wounded to the soul" because his Lordship showed "so much attention, engrossing attention, to the only blockhead at table; the whole company consisted of his Lordship, Dunderpate, and myself." This Dunderpate, who dined with Lord Glencairn, might have been of more importance to the world than even a poet; one of the best and most useful men in it. Burns was equally offended with another of his patrons, and a literary

brother, Dr. Blair. At the moment, he too appeared to be neglecting the irritable Poet—"for the mere carcass of greatness—or when his eye measured the difference of their point of elevation; I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion," (he might have added, except a good deal of contempt,) "what do I care for him or his pomp either?"—"Dr. Blair's vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintance," adds Burns, at the moment that the solitary haughtiness of his own genius had entirely escaped his self-observation. Such are the chimeras of passion infesting the distempered imagination of irritable genius!

Such therefore are censured for great irritability of disposition; and that happy equality of temper so prevalent among mere men of letters,* and which is conveniently acquired by men of the world, has been usually refused to great mental powers, or to vivacious dispositions; authors or artists. The man of wit becomes petulant, and the profound thinker, morose.

* The class of Literary Characters whom I would distinguish as MEN OF LETTERS, are described under that title in this volume.

When Rousseau once retired to a village, he had to learn to endure its conversation; for this purpose he was compelled to invent an expedient to get rid of his uneasy sensations. "Alone," says Rousseau, "I have never known ennui, even when perfectly unoccupied; my imagination, filling the void, was sufficient to busy me. It is only the inactive chit-chat of the room, when every one is seated face to face, and only moving their tongues, which I never could support. There to be a fixture, nailed with one hand on the other, to settle the state of the weather, or watch the flies about one, or what is worse, to be bandying compliments, this to me is not bearable." He hit on the expedient of making lace-strings, carrying his working cushion in his visits, to keep the peace with the country gossips.

Is the occupation of making a great name less anxious and precarious than that of making a great fortune? the progress of a man's capital is unequivocal to him, but that of the fame of an author, or an artist, is for the greater part of their lives of an ambiguous nature. They find it in one place, and they lose it in another. We may often smile at the local gradations of genius; the esteem in which an author is held here,

and the contempt he encounters there; here the learned man is condemned as a heavy drone, and there the man of wit annoys the unwitty listener.

And are not the anxieties, of even the most successful, renewed at every work? often quitted in despair, often returned to with rapture; the same agitation of the spirits, the same poignant delight, the same weariness, the same dissatisfaction, the same querulous languishment after excellence. Is the man of genius a discoverer? the discovery is contested, or it is not comprehended for ten years after, or during his whole life; even men of science are as children before him. There is a curious letter in Sir Thomas Bodley's Remains to Lord Bacon, then Sir Francis, where he remonstrates with Bacon on his *new mode of philosophising*. It seems the fate of all originality of thinking to be immediately opposed; no contemporary seems equal to its comprehension. Bacon was not at all understood at home in his own day; his celebrity was confined to his History of Henry VII. and to his Essays. In some unpublished letters I find Sir Edward Coke writing very miserable, but very bitter verses, on a copy of the *Instauratio* presented to him by Bacon, and even James I.

declaring that, like God's power, "it passeth beyond all understanding." When Kepler published his work on Comets, the first rational one, it was condemned even by the learned themselves as extravagant. We see the learned Selden signing his recantation; and long afterwards the propriety of his argument on Tithes fully allowed; the aged Galileo on his knees, with his hand on the Gospels, abjuring, as absurdities, errors, and heresies, the philosophical truths he had ascertained. Harvey, in his eightieth year, did not live to witness his great discovery established. Adam Smith was reproached by the economists for having borrowed his system from them, as if the mind of genius does not borrow little parts to create its own vast views. The great Sydenham, by the independence and force of his genius, so highly provoked the malignant emulation of his rivals, that they conspired to have him banished out of the College as "guilty of medicinal heresy." Such is the fate of men of genius, who advance a century beyond their contemporaries!

Is our man of genius a learned author? Erudition is a thirst which its fountains have never satiated. What volumes remain to open! What manuscript but makes his heart palpitate! There

is no measure, no term in researches, which every new fact may alter, and a date may dissolve. Truth! thou fascinating, but severe mistress! thy adorers are often broken down in thy servitude, performing a thousand unregarded task-works;* or now winding thee through thy laby-

* Look on a striking picture of these thousand task-works, coloured by his literary pangs, of Le Grand D'Aussy, the literary antiquary, who could never finish his very curious work, on "The History of the private life of the French."

"Endowed with a courage at all proofs, with health, which till then was unaltered, and which excess of labour has greatly changed, I devoted myself to write the lives of the learned, of the sixteenth century. Renouncing all kinds of pleasure, working ten to twelve hours a day, extracting, ceaselessly copying; after this sad life, I now wished to draw breath, turn over what I had amassed, and arrange it. I found myself possessed of many thousands of *bulletins*, of which the longest did not exceed many lines. At the sight of this frightful chaos, from which I was to form a regular history, I must confess that I shuddered; I felt myself for some time in a stupor and depression of spirits; and now actually that I have finished this work, I cannot endure the recollection of that moment of alarm, without a feeling of involuntary terror. What a business is this, good God, of a compiler! in truth it is too much condemned; it merits some regard. At length I regained courage, I returned to my researches: I have completed my plan, though every day I was forced to add, to correct, to change my facts as well as my ideas: six times has my hand recopied my work, and however fatiguing this may be, it certainly is not that portion of my task which has cost me most."

rinth, with a single thread often unravelling, and now feeling their way in darkness, doubtful if it be thyself they are touching. The man of erudition, after his elaborate work, is exposed to the fatal omissions of wearied vigilance, or the accidental knowledge of some inferior mind, and always to the taste, whatever it chance to be, of the public.

The favourite work of Newton was his Chronology, which he wrote over fifteen times; but desisted from its publication during his life-time, from the ill usage he had received, of which he gave several instances to Pearce, the Bishop of Rochester. The same occurred to Sir John Marsham, who found himself accused as not being friendly to revelation. When the learned Pocock published a specimen of his translation of Abulpharagius, an Arabian historian, in 1649, it excited great interest, but when he published his complete version, in 1663, it met with no encouragement; in the course of those thirteen years, the genius of the times had changed; oriental studies were no longer in request. Thevenot then could not find a bookseller in London or at Amsterdam to print his Abulfeda, nor another, learned in Arabian lore, his history of Saladine.

The reputation of a writer of taste is subjected to more difficulties than any other. Every day we observe, of a work of genius, that those parts which have all the raciness of the soil, and as such are most liked by its admirers, are the most criticised. Modest critics shelter themselves under that general amnesty too freely granted, that tastes are allowed to differ; but we should approximate much nearer to the truth if we say that but few of mankind are capable of relishing the beautiful, with that enlarged taste, which comprehends all the forms of feeling which genius may assume; forms which may even at times be associated with defects. Would our author delight with the style of taste, of imagination, of passion? a path opens strewed with roses, but his feet bleed on their invisible thorns. A man of genius composes in a state of intellectual emotion, and the magic of his style consists of the movements of the soul, but the art of conducting those movements is separate from the feeling which inspires them. The idea in the mind is not always to be found under the pen. The artist's conception often breathes not in his pencil. He toils, and repeatedly toils, to throw into our minds that sympathy with which we hang over the illusion of his pages, and become himself. A great author is a great artist; if the

hand cannot leave the picture, how much beauty will he undo! yet still he is lingering, still strengthening the weak, still subduing the daring, still searching for that single idea which awakens so many in others, while often, as it once happened, the dash of despair hangs the foam on the horse's nostrils. The art of composition is of such slow attainment, that a man of genius, late in life, may discover how its secret conceals itself in the habit. When Fox meditated on a history which should last with the language, he met his evil genius in this new province: the rapidity and the fire of his elocution were extinguished by a pen unconsecrated by long and previous study; he saw that he could not class with the great historians of every great people; he complained, while he mourned over the fragment of genius, which, after such zealous preparation, he dared not complete. Rousseau has glowingly described the ceaseless inquietude by which he obtained the seductive eloquence of his style, and has said that with whatever talent a man may be born, the art of writing is not easily obtained. His existing manuscripts display more erasures than Pope's, and show his eagerness to set down his first thoughts, and his art to raise them to the impassioned style of his imagination. The memoir of Gibbon was composed seven or nine times, and

after all, was left unfinished. Burn's anxiety in finishing his poems was great; "all my poetry," says he, "is the effect of easy composition, but of laborious correction."

Pope, when employed on the Iliad, found it not only occupy his thoughts by day, but haunting his dreams by night, and once wished himself hanged, to get rid of Homer: and that he experienced often such literary agonies, witness his description of the depressions and elevations of genius,

"Who pants for glory, finds but short repose,
A breath revives him, or a breath o'erthrows!"

Thus must the days of a great author be passed in labours as unremitting and exhausting as those of the artizan. The world are not always aware, that to some, meditation, composition, and even conversation, may inflict pains undetected by the eye and the tenderness of friendship. Whenever Rousseau passed a morning in company, he tells us it was observed that in the evening he was dissatisfied and distressed; and John Hunter, in a mixed company, found conversation fatigued, instead of amusing him. Hawksworth, in the second paper of the *Adventurer*, has composed, from his own feelings, an eloquent comparative

estimate of intellectual and corporeal labour; it may console the humble mechanic.

The anxious uncertainty of an author for his compositions resembles that of a lover when he has written to a mistress, not yet decided on his claims; he repents his labour, for he thinks he has written too much, while he is mortified at recollecting that he had omitted some things which he imagines would have secured the object of his wishes. Madame de Staël, who has often entered into feelings familiar to a literary and political family, in a parallel between ambition with genius, has distinguished them in this, that while “ambition *perseveres* in the desire of acquiring power, genius *flags* of itself. Genius in the midst of society is a pain, an internal fever which would require to be treated as a real disease, if the records of glory did not soften the sufferings it produces.”

These moments of anxiety often darken the brightest hours of genius. Racine had extreme sensibility; the pain inflicted by a severe criticism outweighed all the applause he received. He seems to have felt, what he was often reproached with, that his Greeks, his Jews, and his Turks were all inmates of Versailles. He

had two critics, who, like our Dennis with Pope and Addison, regularly dogged his pieces as they appeared. Corneille's objections he would attribute to jealousy—at his burlesqued pieces at the Italian theatre, he would smile outwardly, though sick at heart,—but his son informs us, that a stroke of raillery from his witty friend Chapelle, whose pleasantry scarcely concealed its bitterness, sunk more deeply into his heart than the burlesques at the Italian theatre, the protest of Corneille, and the iteration of the two Dennises. The life of Tasso abounds with pictures of a complete exhaustion of this kind; his contradictory critics had perplexed him with the most intricate literary discussions, and probably occasioned a mental alienation. We find in one of his letters that he repents the composition of his great poem, for although his own taste approved of that marvellous, which still forms the nobler part of its creation, yet he confesses that his critics have decided, that the history of his hero Godfrey required another species of conduct. “Hence,” cries the unhappy bard, “doubts vex me; but for the past and what is done, I know of no remedy;” and he longs to precipitate the publication that “he may be delivered from misery and agony.” He solemnly swears that “did not the circumstances

of my situation compel me, I would not print it, even perhaps during my life, I so much doubt of its success." Such was that painful state of fear and doubt, experienced by the author of the "Jerusalem Delivered" when he gave it to the world; a state of suspense, among the children of imagination, of which none are more liable to participate in, than the too sensitive artist. At Florence may still be viewed the many works begun and abandoned by the genius of Michael Angelo; they are preserved inviolate; "so sacred is the terror of Michael Angelo's genius!" exclaims Forsyth. Yet these works are not always to be considered as failures of the chissel; they appear rather to have been rejected by coming short of the artist's first conceptions. An interesting domestic story has been preserved of Gesner, who so zealously devoted his graver and his pencil to the arts, but his sensibility was ever struggling after that ideal excellence he could not attain; often he sunk into fits of melancholy, and gentle as he was, the tenderness of his wife and friends could not sooth his distempered feelings; it was necessary to abandon him to his own thoughts, till after a long abstinence from his neglected works, in a lucid moment, some accident occasioned him to return to them. In one of these hypochondria

of genius, after a long interval of despair, one morning at breakfast with his wife, his eye fixed on one of his pictures; it was a group of fauns with young shepherds dancing at the entrance of a cavern shaded with vines; his eye appeared at length to glisten; and a sudden return to good humour broke out in this lively apostrophe, "Ah! see those playful children, they always dance!" This was the moment of gaiety and inspiration, and he flew to his forsaken easel.

La Harpe, an author by profession, observes, that as it has been shown, that there are some maladies peculiar to artists,—there are also sorrows which are peculiar to them, and which the world can neither pity nor soften, because they do not enter into their experience. The querulous language of so many men of genius has been sometimes attributed to causes very different from the real ones,—the most fortunate live to see their talents contested and their best works decried. An author with certain critics seems much in the situation of Benedict, when he exclaimed—"Hang me in a bottle, like a cat, and shoot at me; and he that hits me, let him be clapped on the shoulder, and called Adam!" Assuredly many an author has sunk

into his grave without the consciousness of having obtained that fame for which he had in vain sacrificed an arduous life. The too feeling Smollet has left this testimony to posterity. "Had some of those, who are pleased to call themselves my friends, been at any pains to deserve the character, and told me ingenuously what I had to expect in the capacity of an *author*, I should, in all probability, have spared myself the *incredible labour* and *chagrin* I have since undergone." And Smollet was a popular writer! Pope's solemn declaration in the preface to his collected works comes by no means short of Smollet's avowal. Hume's philosophical indifference could often suppress that irritability which Pope and Smollet fully indulged. But were the feelings of Hume more obtuse, or did his temper, gentle as it was constitutionally, bear, with a saintly patience, the mortifications his literary life so long endured? After recomposing two of his works, which incurred the same neglect in their altered form, he raised the most sanguine hopes of his history,—but he tells us, "miserable was my disappointment!" The reasoning Hume once proposed changing his name and his country! and although he never deigned to reply to his opponents, yet they haunted him; and an eye-witness has thus described the irritated author discovering in conversation

his suppressed resentment—"His forcible mode of expression, the brilliant quick movements of his eyes, and the gestures of his body,"—these betrayed the pangs of contempt, or of aversion! Erasmus once resolved to abandon for ever his favourite literary pursuits; "if this," he exclaimed, alluding to his adversaries, "if this be the fruits of all my youthful labours!—"

Parties confederate against a man of genius, as happened to Corneille, to D'Avenant* and Milton, and a Pradon and a Settle carry away the meed of a Racine and a Dryden. It was to support the drooping spirit of his friend Racine on the opposition raised against Phædra, that Boileau addressed to him an epistle on the utility to be drawn from the jealousy of the envious. It was more to the world than to his country, that Lord Bacon appealed, by a frank and noble conception in his will,—“For my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and the next age.” The calm dignity of the historian De Thou, amidst the passions of his times, confidently expected that justice from posterity which his own age refused to his early and his late labour: that

* See “Quarrels of Authors,” vol. ii. on the confederacy of several wits against D'Avenant, a great genius.

great man was, however, compelled, by his injured feelings, to compose a poem, under the name of another, to serve as his apology against the intolerant Court of Rome, and the factious politicians of France; it was a noble subterfuge to which a great genius was forced. The acquaintances of the poet Collins probably complained of his wayward humours and irritability; but how could they sympathize with the secret mortification of the poet for having failed in his Pastorals, imagining that they were composed on wrong principles; or with a secret agony of soul, burning with his own hands his unsold, but immortal Odes? Nor must we forget here the dignified complaint of the Rambler, with which he awfully closes his work, in appealing to posterity.

In its solitary occupations, genius contracts its peculiarities, and in that sensibility which accompanies it, that loftiness of spirit, those quick jealousies, those excessive affections and aversions, which view every thing, as it passes in its own ideal world, and rarely as it exists in the mediocrity of reality. This irritability of genius is a malady which has raged even among philosophers: we must not, therefore, be surprised at the poetical temperament. They have abandoned

their country, they have changed their name, they have punished themselves with exile in the rage of their disorder. Descartes sought in vain, even in his secreted life, a refuge for his genius; he thought himself persecuted in France, he thought himself calumniated among strangers, and he went and died in Sweden; and little did that man of genius think, that his countrymen would beg to have his ashes restored to them. Hume once proposed to change his name and his country, and I believe did. The great poetical genius of our times has openly alienated himself from the land of his brothers; he becomes immortal in the language of a people whom he would contemn; he accepts with ingratitude the fame he loves more than life, and he is only truly great on that spot of earth, whose genius, when he is no more, will contemplate on his shade in anger and in sorrow.

Thus, the state of authorship is not friendly to equality of temper; and in those various humours incidental to it, when authors are often affected deeply, while the cause escapes all perception of sympathy, at those moments the lightest injury to the feelings, which at another time would make no impression, may produce even fury in the warm temper, or the corroding

chagrin of a self-wounded spirit. These are moments which claim the tenderness of friendship, animated by a high esteem for the intellectual excellence of this man of genius,—not the general intercourse of society,—not the insensibility of the dull, nor the levity of the volatile.

Men of genius are often revered only where they are known by their writings; intellectual beings in the romance of life,—in its history, they are men! Erasmus compared them to the great figures in tapestry-work, which lose their effect when not seen at a distance. Their foibles and their infirmities are obvious to their associates, often only capable of discerning these qualities. The defects of great men are the consolation of the dunces.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPIRIT OF LITERATURE AND THE
SPIRIT OF SOCIETY.

WHEN a general intercourse in society prevails, the age of great genius has passed; an equality of talents rages among a multitude of authors and artists; they have extended the superficialities of genius, but have lost the intensity; the contest is more furious, but victory is more rare. The founders of National Literature and Art pursued their insulated studies in the full independence of their mind and the development of their inventive faculty. The master-spirits who create an epoch, the inventors, lived at periods when they inherited nothing from their predecessors; in seclusion they stood apart, the solitary lights of their age.

At length, when a people have emerged to glory, and a silent revolution has obtained, by

a more uniform light of knowledge coming from all sides, the genius of society becomes greater than the genius of the individual: hence, the character of genius itself becomes subordinate. A conversation age succeeds a studious one, and the family of genius are no longer recluses.

The man of genius is now trammelled with the artificial and mechanical forms of life; and in too close an intercourse with society, the loneliness and raciness of thinking is modified away in its seductive conventions. An excessive indulgence in the pleasures of social life constitutes the great interests of a luxurious and opulent age.

It may be a question, whether the literary man and the artist are not immolating their genius to society, when, with the mockery of Proteus, they lose their own by all' orms, in the shadowiness of assumed talent. But a path of roses, where all the senses are flattered, is now opened to win an Epictetus from his hut. The morning lounge, the luxurious dinner, and the evening party are the regulated dissipations of hours which true genius knows are always too short for Art, and too

rare for its inspirations; and hence so many of our contemporaries, whose card-racks are crowded, have produced only flashy fragments,—efforts, and not works. It is seduction, and not reward, which mere fashionable society offers the man of true genius, for he must be distinguished from those men of the world, who have assumed the literary character, for purposes very distinct from literary ones. In this society, the man of genius shall cease to interest, whatever be his talent; he will be sought for with enthusiasm, but he cannot escape from his certain fate,—that of becoming tiresome to his pretended admirers. The confidential confession of Racine to his son is remarkable. “Do not think that I am sought after by the great for my dramas; Corneille composes nobler verses than mine, but no one notices him, and he only pleases by the mouth of the actors. I never allude to my works when with men of the world, but I amuse them about matters they like to hear. My talent with them consists not in making them feel that I have any, but in showing them that they have”—Racine treated the Great, like the children of society; Corneille would not compromise for the tribute he exacted; and consoled himself

when, at his entrance into the theatre, the audience usually rose to salute him.

Has not the fate of our reigning literary favourites been uniform? Their mayoralty hardly exceeds the year. They are pushed aside to put in their place another, who in his turn must descend. Such is the history of the literary character encountering the perpetual difficulty of appearing what he really is not, while he sacrifices to a few, in a certain corner of the metropolis, who have long fantastically called themselves "The World," that more dignified celebrity which makes an author's name more familiar than his person. To one who appeared astonished at the extensive celebrity of Buffon, the modern Pliny replied, "I have passed fifty years at my desk." And has not one, the most sublime of the race, sung—

—————che seggendo in piuma
 In Fama non si vien, ne sotto coltre ;
 Senza la qual chi sua vita consuma
 Cotal vestigio in terra di se lascia
 Qual fummo in aere, ed in acqua la schiuma.

*Dante, Inferno, c. xxiv.**

* "Not by reposing on pillows or under canopies, is Fame acquired, without which he, who consumes his life, leaves such an unregarded vestige on the earth of his being, as the smoke in the air or the foam on the wave."

Another, who had great experience of the world and of literature,* observes, that literary men (and artists) seek an intercourse with the great from a refinement of self-love; they are perpetually wanting a confirmation of their own talents in the opinions of others, (for their rivals are, at all times, very cruelly and very adroitly diminishing their reputation;) for this purpose, they require judges sufficiently enlightened to appreciate their talents, but who do not exercise too penetrating a judgment. Now this is exactly the state of the generality of the great, (or persons of fashion,) who cultivate taste and literature; these have only time to acquire that degree of light which is just sufficient to set at ease the fears of these claimants of genius. Their eager vanity is more voracious than delicate, and is willing to accept an incense less durable than ambrosia.

The habitudes of genius, before it lost its freshness in this society, are the mould in which the character is cast; and these, in spite of all the disguise of the man, hereafter make him a distinct being from the man of society. There

* D'Alembert's *la Société des Gens de Lettres et des Grands*.

is something solitary in deep feelings; and the amusers who can only dazzle and surprize, will never spread that contagious energy only springing from the fullness of the heart. Let the man of genius then dread to level himself to that mediocrity of feeling and talent required in every-day society, lest he become one of themselves. Ridicule is the shadowy scourge of society, and the terror of the man of genius; Ridicule surrounds him with her chimeras, like the shadowy monsters which opposed Æneas, too impalpable to be grasped, while the airy nothings triumph, unwounded by a weapon.— Æneas was told to pass the grinning monsters unnoticed, and they would then be as harmless, as they were unreal.

Study, Meditation, and Enthusiasm,—this is the progress of genius, and these cannot be the habits of him who lingers till he can only live among polished crowds. If he bears about him the consciousness of genius, he will be still acting under their influences. And perhaps there never was one of this class of men who had not either first entirely formed himself in solitude, or amidst society is perpetually breaking out to seek for himself. Wilkes, who, when no longer touched by the fervours of literary and

patriotic glory, grovelled into a domestic voluptuary, observed with some surprize of the great Earl of Chatham, that he sacrificed every pleasure of social life, even in youth, to his great pursuit of eloquence; and the Earl himself acknowledged an artifice he practised in his intercourse with society, for he said, when he was young he always came late into company, and left it early. Vittorio Alfieri, and a brother-spirit in our own noble poet, were rarely seen amidst the brilliant circle in which they were born; the workings of their imagination were perpetually emancipating them, and one deep loneliness of feeling proudly insulated them among the unimpassioned triflers of their rank. They preserved unbroken the unity of their character, in constantly escaping from the processional *spectacle* of society, by frequent intervals of retirement. It is no trivial observation of another noble writer, Lord Shaftesbury, that "it may happen that a person may be so much the worse author, for being the finer gentleman."

An extraordinary instance of this disagreement between the man of the world and the literary character, we find in a philosopher seated on a throne. The celebrated Julian stained the imperial purple with an author's

ink ; and when that Emperor resided among the Antiochians, his unalterable character shocked that volatile and luxurious race ; he slighted the plaudits of their theatre, he abhorred their dancers and their horse-racers, he was abstinent even at a festival, and perpetually incorrupt, admonished this dissipated people of their impious abandonment of the laws of their country. They libelled the Emperor and petulantly lampooned his beard, which the philosopher carelessly wore, neither perfumed nor curled.— Julian, scorning to inflict a sharper punishment, pointed at them his satire of “ the Misopogon, or the Antiochian ; the Enemy of the Beard,” where amidst the irony and invective, the literary monarch bestows on himself many exquisite and individual touches. All that those persons of fashion alleged against the literary character, Julian unreservedly confesses—his undressed beard and his awkwardnesses, his obstinacy, his unsociable habits, his deficient tastes, &c., while he represents his good qualities as so many extravagancies. But, in this pleasantry of self-reprehension, he has not failed to show this light and corrupt people that he could not possibly resemble them. The unhappiness of too strict an education under a family tutor, who never suffered him to swerve from the one

right way, with the unlucky circumstance of his master having inspired Julian with such a reverence for Plato and Socrates, Aristotle and Theophrastus, as to have made them his models: "Whatever manners," says the Emperor, "I may have previously contracted, whether gentle or boorish, it is impossible for me now to alter or unlearn. Habit is said to be a second nature; to oppose it is irksome, but to counteract *the study of more than thirty years* is extremely difficult, especially when it has been imbibed with so much attention."

And what if men of genius, relinquishing their habits, could do this violence to their nature, should we not lose the original for a factitious genius, and spoil one race without improving the other? If nature, and habit, that second nature which prevails even over the first, have created two beings distinctly different, what mode of existence shall ever assimilate them? Antipathies and sympathies, those still occult causes, however concealed, will break forth at an unguarded moment. The man of genius will be restive even in his trammelled paces. Clip the wings of an eagle and place him to roost among the domestic poultry; will he peck with them? will he chuck like them? At some un-

foreseen moment his pinions will overshadow and terrify his tiny associates, for "the feathered king" will be still musing on the rock and the cloud.

Thus is it, as our literary Emperor discovered, that "we cannot counteract the study of more than thirty years, when it has been imbibed with so much attention." Men of genius are usually not practised in the minuter attentions; in those heartless courtesies, poor substitutes for generous feelings; they have rarely sacrificed to the unlaughing graces of Lord Chesterfield. Plato ingeniously compares Socrates to the gallipots of the Athenian apothecaries, which were painted on the exterior with the grotesque figures of apes and owls, but contained within a precious balm. The man of genius may exclaim amidst many a circle, as did Themistocles, when asked to play on a lute—"I cannot fiddle, but I can make a little village a great city;" and with Corneille he may be allowed to smile at his own deficiencies, and even disdain to please in trivials, asserting that, "wanting all these things, he was not the less Corneille." With the great thinkers and students, their character is still more hopeless. Adam Smith could never free himself from the embarrassed manners of a recluse;

he was often absent; and his grave and formal conversation made him seem distant and reserved, when, in fact, no man had warmer feelings for his intimates. Buffon's conversation was very indifferent—and the most eloquent writer was then coarse and careless; after each laborious day of study, he pleaded that conversation was to him only a relaxation. Rousseau gave no indication of his energetic style in conversation. A princess, desirous of seeing the great moralist Nicolle, experienced inconceivable disappointment, when the moral instructor, entering with the most perplexing bow imaginable, sank down silently on his chair; the interview promoted no conversation; and the retired student, whose elevated spirit might have endured martyrdom, sank with timidity in the unaccustomed honour of conversing with a princess, and having nothing to say. A lively Frenchman, in a very ingenious description of the distinct sorts of conversations of his numerous literary friends, among whom was Dr. Franklin, energetically hits off that close observer and thinker, wary even in society; among these varieties of conversation he has noted down "the silence of the celebrated Franklin." When Lord Oxford desired to be introduced to the studious Thomas Baker, he very unaffectedly declined, in a letter I have

seen, that honour, "as a rash adventure he could not think of engaging in, not having fitted himself for any conversation, but with the dead."

But this deficient agreeableness in a man of genius may be often connected with those qualities which conduce to the greatness of his public character. A vivid perception of truth on the sudden, bursts with an irruptive heat on the subdued tone of conversation; should he hesitate, that he may correct an equivocal expression, or grasp at a remote idea, he is in danger of sinking into pedantry or rising to genius. Even the tediousness he bestows on us, may well out from the fulness of knowledge, or be hammered into a hard chain of reasoning; and how often is the cold tardiness of decision, the strict balancings of scepticism and candour! even obscurity may arise from the want of previous knowledge in the listener. But above all, what offends is that freedom of opinion, which a man of genius can no more divest himself of than of the features of his face; that intractable obstinacy which may be called resistance of character—a rock which checks the flowing stream of popular opinions, and divides them by the collision. Poor Burns could never account to himself why, "though when he had a mind he was pretty generally be-

loved, he could never get the art of commanding respect." He imagined it was owing to his being deficient in what Sterne calls "that understrapping virtue of discretion." "I am so apt," he says, "to a *lapsus linguæ*."

It is remarkable that the conversationists have rarely proved themselves to be the abler writers. He whose fancy is susceptible of excitement, in the presence of his auditors, making the minds of men run with his own, seizing on the first impressions, and touching, as if he really felt them, the shadows and outlines of things—with a memory where all lies ready at hand, quickened by habitual associations, and varying with all those extemporary changes and fugitive colours, which melt away in the rainbow of conversation; that jargon, or vocabulary of fashion, those terms and phrases of the week perpetually to be learnt; that wit, which is only wit in one place, and for a certain time; such vivacity of animal spirits, which often exists separately from the more retired intellectual powers; all these can strike out wit by habit, and pour forth a stream of phrase that has sometimes been imagined to require only to be written down, to be read with the same delight it was heard; we have not all the while been sensible of the flutter

of their ideas, the violence of their transitions, their vague notions, their doubtful assertions, and their meagre knowledge—a pen is the extinguisher of these luminaries. A curious contrast occurred between Buffon and his friend Montbelliard, who was associated in his great work; the one possessed the reverse qualities of the other. Montbelliard threw every charm of animation over his delightful conversation, but when he came to take his seat at the rival desk of Buffon, an immense interval separated them; his tongue distilled the music and the honey of the bee, but his pen seemed to be iron, as cold and as hard, while Buffon's was the soft pencil of the philosophical painter of nature. The characters of Cowly and Killegrew are an instance. Cowly was embarrassed in conversation, and had not quickness in argument or repartee; pensive elegance and refined combinations could not be struck at to catch fire; while with Killegrew the sparkling bubbles of his fancy rose and dropped; yet when this delightful conversationist wrote, the deception ceased. Denham, who knew them both, lit off the difference between them;—

“ Had Cowly ne'er spoke ; Killegrew ne'er writ,
Combin'd in one, they had made a matchless wit.”

Thought and expression are only found easily when they lie on the surface; the operations of the intellect with some, are slow and deep. Hence it is that slow-minded men are not, as men of the world imagine, always the dullest. Nicolle said of a scintillant wit, "He conquers me in the drawing-room, but he surrenders to me at discretion on the staircase." Many a great wit has thought the wit which he never spoke, and many a great reasoner has perplexed his listeners. The conversation-powers of some resemble the show-glass of the fashionable trader; all his moderate capital is there spread out in the last novelties; the *magasin* within is neither rich nor rare. Chaucer was more facetious in his Tales, than in his conversation, for the Countess of Pembroke used to rally him, observing that his silence was more agreeable to her than his conversation. Tasso's conversation, which his friend Manso has attempted to preserve to us, was neither gay nor brilliant; and Goldoni, in his drama of Torquato Tasso, has thus contrasted the poet's writings and conversation;—

Ammiro il suo talento, gradisco i carmi suoi;
Ma piacer non trovo a conversar con lui.

The sublime Dante was taciturn or satirical; Butler was sullen or biting; Descartes, whose habits had formed him for solitude and meditation, was silent. Addison and Molière were only observers in society; and Dryden has very honestly told us, "my conversation is slow and dull; my humour saturnine and reserved; in short I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, or make repartees." It was ingeniously said of Vaucanson, that he was as much a machine as any he made. Hogarth and Swift, who looked on the circles of society with eyes of inspiration, were absent in company; but their grossness and asperity did not prevent the one from being the greatest of comic painters, nor the other as much a creator of manners in his way. Genius even in society is pursuing its own operations; but it would cease to be itself, in becoming another.

One peculiar trait in the conversations of men of genius, which has often injured them when the listeners were not intimately acquainted with the man, are certain sports of a vacant mind; a sudden impulse to throw out opinions, and take views of things in some humour of the moment. Extravagant paradoxes and false opinions are caught up by the humbler proser; and the Philistines are thus enabled to triumph over

the strong and gifted man, because in the hour of confidence and in the abandonment of the mind, he laid his head in their lap and taught them how he might be shorn of his strength. Dr. Johnson appears often to have indulged this amusement in good and in ill humour. Even such a calm philosopher as Adam Smith, as well as such a child of imagination as Burns, were remarked for this ordinary habit of men of genius, which perhaps as often originates in a gentle feeling of contempt for their auditors, as from any other cause.

Not however that a man of genius does not utter many startling things in conversation which have been found admirable, when the public perused them. How widely the public often differ from the individual! a century's opinion may intervene between them. The fate of genius resembles that of the Athenian sculptor, who submitted his colossal Minerva to a private party; before the artist they trembled for his daring chissel, and behind him they calumniated. The man of genius smiled at the one, and forgave the other. The statue once fixed in a public place, and seen by the whole city, was the divinity. There is a certain distance at which opinions, as well as statues, must be viewed.

But enough of those defects of men of genius, which often attend their conversations. Must we then bow to authorial dignity, and kiss hands, because they are inked; and to the artist, who thinks us as nothing unless we are canvass under his hands? are there not men of genius, the grace of society? fortunate men! more blest than their brothers; but for this, they are not the more men of genius, nor the others less. To how many of the ordinary intimates of a superior genius, who complain of his defects, might one say, "Do his productions not delight and sometimes surprise you?—You are silent—I beg your pardon; the *public* has informed you of a great name; you would not otherwise have perceived the precious talent of your neighbour. You know little of your friend but his *name*." The personal familiarity of ordinary minds with a man of genius has often produced a ludicrous prejudice. A scotchman, to whom the name of a Dr. Robertson had travelled down, was curious to know who he was? "Your neighbour!" but he could not persuade himself that the man whom he conversed with was the great historian of his country. Even a good man could not believe in the announcement of the Messiah, from the same sort of prejudice, "Can there

any thing good come out of Nazareth?" said Nathaniel.

Suffer a man of genius to be such as nature and habit have formed him, and he will then be the most interesting companion; then will you see nothing but his mighty mind when it opens itself on you. Barry was the most repulsive of men in his exterior, in the roughness of his language and the wildness of his looks; intermingling vulgar oaths, which, by some unlucky association of habit, he seemed to use as strong expletives and notes of admiration. His conversation has communicated even a horror to some: on one of these occasions, a pious lady, who had felt such intolerable uneasiness in his presence, did not however leave this man of genius that evening, without an impression that she had never heard so divine a man in her life. The conversation happening to turn on that principle of Benevolence which pervades Christianity and the meekness of the Founder, it gave Barry an opportunity of opening on the character of Jesus, with that copiousness of heart and mind, which once heard could never be forgotten. That artist had indeed long in his meditations, an ideal head of Christ, which he was always talking to execute; "It is here!" he would cry, striking

his head. What baffled the invention, as we are told, of Leonardo da Vinci, who left his Christ headless, having exhausted his creative faculty among the apostles, Barry was still dreaming on; but this mysterious mixture of a human and celestial nature could only be conceived by his mind, and even the catholic enthusiasm of Barry was compelled to refrain from unveiling it to the eye,—but this unpainted picture was perpetually exciting this artist's emotions in conversation.

Few authors and artists but are eloquently instructive on that sort of knowledge or that department of art which has absorbed all their affections; their conversations affect the mind to a distant period of life. Who has forgotten what a man of genius has said at such moments? the man of genius becomes an exquisite instrument, when the hand of the performer knows to call forth the rich confluence of the sounds; and—

“The flying fingers touch into a voice.”

D'Avenant.

CHAPTER VI.

LITERARY SOLITUDE.

THE literary character is reproached with an extreme passion for retirement, cultivating those insulating habits which are great interruptions, and even weakeners of domestic happiness, while in public life these often induce to a succession from its cares, thus eluding its active duties. Yet the vacancies of retired men are eagerly filled by so many unemployed men of the world more happily framed for its business. We do not hear these accusations raised against the painter who wears away his days at his easel, and the musician by the side of his instrument; and much less should we against the legal and the commercial character; yet all these are as much withdrawn from public and private life as the literary character; their desk is as insulating as the library. Yet is the man who is working for his individual interest more highly estimated than the retired student, whose dis-

succession

terested pursuits are at least more profitable to the world than to himself. La Bruyère discovered the world's erroneous estimate of literary labour: "There requires a better name to be bestowed on the leisure (the idleness he calls it) of the literary character, and that to meditate, to compose, to read and to be tranquil, should be called *working*." But so invisible is the progress of intellectual pursuits, and so rarely are the objects palpable to the observers, that the literary character appears denied for his pursuits, what cannot be refused to every other. That unremitting application, that unbroken series of their thoughts, admired in every profession, is only complained of in that one whose professors with so much sincerity mourn over the shortness of life, which has often closed on them while sketching their works.

It is, however, only in solitude that the genius of eminent men has been formed; there their first thoughts sprang, and there it will become them to find their last: for the solitude of old age—and old age must be often in solitude—will be found the happiest with the literary character. Solitude is the nurse of enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is the true parent of genius; in all ages it has been called for—it has been flown to. No

considerable work was ever composed, but its author, like an ancient magician, first retired to the grove, or to the closet, to invoke. When genius languishes in an irksome solitude among crowds, that is the moment to fly into seclusion and meditation. There is a society in the deepest solitude; in all the men of genius of the past—

“ First of your kind, Society divine!”

Thomson.

and in themselves; for there only they can indulge in the romances of their soul, and only in solitude can they occupy themselves in their dreams and their vigils, and, with the morning, fly without interruption to the labour they had reluctantly quitted. This desert of solitude, so vast and so dreary to the man of the world, to the man of genius opens the magical garden of Armida, whose enchantments arose amidst solitude, while solitude was every where among those enchantments.

Whenever Michael Angelo was meditating on some great design, he closed himself up from the world. “ Why do you lead so solitary a life ?” asked a friend. “ Art,” replied the sublime ar-

tist, " Art is a jealous god ; it requires the whole and entire man."

We observe men of genius, in public situations, sighing for this solitude ; amidst the impediments of the world, and their situation in it, they are doomed to view their intellectual banquet often rising before them, like some fairy delusion, never to taste it. They feel that finer existence in solitude. Lord Clarendon, whose life so happily combined the contemplative with the active powers of man, dwells on three periods of retirement which he enjoyed ; he always took pleasure in relating the great tranquillity of spirit experienced during his solitude at Jersey, where for more than two years, employed on his History, he daily wrote " one sheet of large paper with his own hand." At the close of his life, his literary labours in his other retirements are detailed with a proud satisfaction. Each of his solitudes occasioned a new acquisition ; this the Spanish, that the French, and a third the Italian literature. The public are not yet acquainted with the fertility of Lord Clarendon's literary labours. It was not vanity that induced Scipio to declare of solitude, that it had no loneliness to him, since he voluntarily retired amidst a glorious life to his Linternum. Cicero was uneasy amidst applaud-

ing Rome, and has distinguished his numerous works by the titles of his various villas. Aulus Gellius marked his solitude by his "Attic Nights." The "Golden Grove" of Jeremy Taylor is the produce of his retreat at the Earl of Carberry's seat in Wales; and the "Diversions of Purley" preserved a man of genius for posterity. Voltaire had talents, and perhaps a taste for society; but at one period of his life he passed five years in the most secret seclusion. Montesquieu quitted the brilliant circles of Paris for his books, his meditations, and his immortal work, and was ridiculed by the gay triflers he deserted. Harrington, to compose his *Oceana*, severed himself from the society of his friends. Descartes, inflamed by genius, hires an obscure house in an unfrequented quarter at Paris, and there he passes two years, unknown to his acquaintance. Adam Smith, after the publication of his first work, throws himself into a retirement that lasts ten years: even Hume rallies him for separating himself from the world; but by this means the great political inquirer satisfied the world by his great work. And thus it was with men of genius, long ere Petrarch withdrew to his *Val chiusa*.

The interruption of visitors by profession has been feelingly lamented by men of letters.—

The mind, maturing its speculations, feels the unexpected conversation of cold ceremony, chilling as the blasts of March winds over the blossoms of the Spring. Those unhappy beings who wander from house to house, privileged by the charter of society to obstruct the knowledge they cannot impart, to tire because they are tired, or to seek amusement at the cost of others, belong to that class of society which have affixed no other value to time than that of getting rid of it; these are judges not the best qualified to comprehend the nature and evil of their depredations in the silent apartment of the studious. "We are afraid," said some of those visitors to Baxter, "that we break in upon your time."—To be sure you do," replied the disturbed and blunt scholar. Ursinus, to hint as gently as he could to his friends that he was avaricious of time, contrived to place an inscription over the door of his study, which could not fail to fix their eye, intimating that whoever remained there must join in his labours. The amiable Melancthon, incapable of a harsh expression, when he received these idle visits, only noted down the time he had expended, that he might reanimate his industry, and not lose a day. The literary character has been driven to the most inventive shifts to escape the irruption of a

formidable party at a single rush, who enter without "besieging or beseeching," as Milton has it. The late elegant, poetical Mr. Ellis, on one of these occasions, at his country-house, showed a literary friend, that when driven to the last, he usually made his escape by a leap out of the window. Brand Hollis endeavoured to hold out "the idea of singularity as a shield;" and the great Robert Boyle was compelled to advertise in a newspaper that he must decline visits on certain days, that he might have leisure to finish some of his works.*

But this solitude, at first a necessity, and then a pleasure, at length is not borne without repining. To tame the fervid wildness of youth to the strict regularities of study is a sacrifice performed by the votary; but even Milton appears to have felt this irksome period of life; for in the preface to *Smectymnuus* he says, "It is but justice not to defraud of due esteem the *wearisome labours* and *studious watchings* wherein I have spent and *tired out* almost a whole youth." Cowley, that enthusiast for seclusion, in his retirement calls himself "the mel-

* This curious advertisement is preserved in Dr. Birch's *Life of Boyle*, p. 272.

ancholy Cowley." I have seen an original letter of this poet to Evelyn, where he expresses his eagerness to see Evelyn's Essay on Solitude; for a copy of which he had sent over the town, without obtaining one, being "either all bought up, or burnt in the fire of London." I am the more desirous, he says, because it is a subject in which I am most deeply interested. Thus Cowley was requiring a book to confirm his predilection, and we know he made the experiment, which did not prove a happy one. We find even Gibbon, with all his fame about him, anticipating the dread he entertained of solitude in advanced life. "I feel, and shall continue to feel, that domestic solitude, however it may be alleviated by the world, by study, and even by friendship, is a comfortless state, which will grow more painful as I descend in the vale of years." And again—"Your visit has only served to remind me that man, however amused or occupied in his closet, was not made to live alone."

Had the mistaken notions of Sprat not deprived us of Cowley's correspondence, we doubtless had viewed the sorrows of lonely genius touched by a tender pencil. But we have Shenstone, and Gray, and Swift. The heart of Shenstone bleeds in the dead oblivion of solitude.

“ Now I am come from a visit, every little uneasiness is sufficient to introduce my whole train of melancholy considerations, and to make me utterly dissatisfied with the life I now lead, and the life I foresee I shall lead. I am angry and envious, and dejected, and frantic, and disregard all present things, as becomes a madman to do. I am infinitely pleased, though it is a gloomy joy, with the application of Dr. Swift’s complaint, that he is forced to die in a rage, like a rat in a poisoned hole.” Let the lover of solitude muse on its picture throughout the year, in this stanza by the same amiable, but suffering poet—

Tedious again to curse the drizzling day,
 Again to trace the wintry tracks of snow,
 Or, soothed by vernal airs, again survey
 The self-same hawthorns bud, and cowslips blow.

Swift’s letters paint with terrifying colours a picture of solitude; and at length his despair closed with idiotism. Even the playful muse of Gresset throws a sombre querulousness over the solitude of men of genius—

— Je les vois, Victimes du Génie,
 Au foible prix d’un éclat passager,
 Vivre isolés, sans jouir de la vie !
 Vingt ans d’Ennuis pour quelques jours de Gloire.

Such are the necessity, the pleasures, and the inconveniences of solitude! Were it a question, whether men of genius should blend with the masses of society, one might answer, in a style rather oracular, but intelligible to the initiated—Men of genius! live in solitude, and do not live in solitude!

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEDITATIONS OF GENIUS.

A CONTINUITY of attention, a patient quietness of mind, forms one of the characteristics of genius.

A work on the Art of Meditation has not yet been produced ; it might prove of immense advantage to him who never happened to have more than one solitary idea. The pursuit of a single principle has produced a great work, and a loose hint has conducted to a new discovery. But while in every manual art, every great workman improves on his predecessor, of the art of the mind, notwithstanding the facility of practice and our incessant experience, millions are yet ignorant of the first rudiments ; and men of genius themselves are rarely acquainted with the materials they are working on. Johnson has a curious observation on the mind itself,—he thinks it obtains a stationary point, from

whence it can never advance, occurring before the middle of life. He says, "when the powers of nature have attained their intended energy, they can be no more advanced. The shrub can never become a tree. Nothing then remains but *practice and experience*; and perhaps *why they do so little, may be worth inquiry.*"* The result of this inquiry would probably lay a broader foundation for this art of the mind than we have hitherto possessed. Ferguson has expressed himself with sublimity—"The lustre which man casts around him, like the flame of a meteor, shines only while his motion continues; the moments of rest and of obscurity are the same." What is this art of meditation, but the power of withdrawing ourselves from the world, to view that world moving within ourselves, while we are in repose; as the artist by an optical instrument concentrates the boundless landscape around him, and patiently traces all nature in that small space.

Certain constituent principles of the mind itself, which the study of metaphysics has curiously discovered, offer many important regulations in this desirable art. We may even suspect, since

* I recommend the reader to turn to the whole passage, in Johnson's Letters to Mrs. Thrale, vol. i. p. 296.

men of genius in the present age have confided to us the secrets of their studies, that this art may be carried on by more obvious means, and even by mechanical contrivances, and practical habits. There is a government of our thoughts; and many secrets yet remain to be revealed in the art of the mind; but as yet they consist of insulated facts, from which, however, may hereafter be formed an experimental history. Many little habits may be contracted by genius, and may be observed in ourselves. A mind well organized may be regulated by a single contrivance: it is by a bit of lead that we are enabled to track the flight of time. The mind of genius can be made to take a particular disposition, or train of ideas. It is a remarkable circumstance in the studies of men of genius, that previous to composition they have often awakened their imagination by the imagination of their favourite masters. By touching a magnet they became a magnet. A circumstance has been recorded of Gray, by Mr. Mathias, "as worthy of all acceptance among the higher votaries of the divine art, when they are assured that Mr. Gray never sate down to compose any poetry without previously, and for a considerable time, reading the works of Spenser." But the circumstance was not unusual with Malherbe, Corneille, and Racine; and the most fervid verses of Homer,

and the most tender of Euripides, were often repeated by Milton. Even antiquity exhibits the same exciting intercourse of the mind of genius. Cicero informs us how his eloquence caught inspiration from a constant study of the Latin and Grecian poetry; and it has been recorded of Pompey, who was great even in his youth, that he never undertook any considerable enterprise, without animating his genius by having read to him the character of Agamemnon in the first Iliad; although he acknowledged that the enthusiasm he caught came rather from the poet than the hero. When Bossuet had to compose a funeral oration, he was accustomed to retire for several days to his study, to ruminate over the pages of Homer; and when asked the reason of this habit, he exclaimed, in these lines,

—Magnam mihi mentem, animunque
Delius inspiret Vates—

It is on the same principle of pre-disposing the mind, that many have first generated their feelings in the symphonies of music. Alfieri, often before he wrote, prepared his mind by listening to music—a circumstance which has been recorded of others.

We are scarcely aware how we may govern our thoughts by means of our sensations. De Luc was subject to violent bursts of passion, but he calmed the interior tumult by the artifice of filling his mouth with sweets and comfits. When Goldoni found his sleep disturbed by the obtrusive ideas still floating from the studies of the day, he contrived to lull himself to rest by conning in his mind a vocabulary of the Venetian dialect, translating some word into Tuscan and French; which being a very uninteresting occupation, at the third or fourth version this recipe never failed. This was an art of withdrawing attention from the greater to the less emotion; where, as the interest weakened, the excitement ceased. Mendelsohn, whose feeble and too sensitive frame was often reduced to the last stage of suffering by intellectual exertion, when engaged in any point of difficulty, would in an instant contrive a perfect cessation from thinking, by mechanically going to the window, and counting the tiles upon the roof of his neighbour's house. Facts like these show how much art may be concerned in the management of the mind.

Some profound thinkers could not pursue the operations of their mind in the distraction of

light and noise. Mallebranche, Hobbes, Thomas, and others closed their curtains to concentrate their thoughts, as Milton says of the mind, "in the spacious circuits of her musing." The study of an author or an artist would be ill placed in the midst of a beautiful landscape; the *Penseroso* of Milton, "hid from day's garish eye," is the man of genius. A secluded and naked apartment, with nothing but a desk, a chair, and a single sheet of paper, was for fifty years the study of Buffon; the single ornament was a print of Newton placed before his eyes—nothing broke into the unity of his reveries.

The arts of memory have at all times excited the attention of the studious; they open a world of undivulged mysteries; every one seems to form some discovery of his own, but which rather excites his astonishment than enlarges his comprehension. When the late William Hutton, a man of an original cast of mind, as an experiment in memory, opened a book which he had divided into 365 columns, according to the days of the year, he resolved to try to recollect an anecdote, as insignificant and remote as he was able, rejecting all under ten years

of age; and to his surprise, he filled those spaces for small reminiscencies, within ten columns; but till this experiment had been made, he never conceived the extent of this faculty. When we reflect, that whatever we know, and whatever we feel, are the very smallest portions of all the knowledge and all the feelings we have been acquiring through life, how desirable would be that art, which should open again the scenes which have vanished, revive the emotions which other impressions have effaced, and enrich our thoughts, with thoughts not less precious; the man of genius who shall possess this art, will not satisfy himself with the knowledge of a few mornings and its transient emotions, writing on the moveable sand of present sensations, present feelings, which alter with the first breezes of public opinion. Memory is the foundation of genius; for this faculty, with men of genius, is associated with imagination and passion, it is a chronology not merely of events, but of emotions; hence they remember nothing that is not interesting to their feelings, while the ordinary mind, accurate on all events alike, is not impassioned on any. The incidents of the novelist, are often founded on the common ones of life; and the personages so admirably alive in his

fictions, he only discovered among the crowd. The arts of memory will preserve all we wish; they form a saving bank of genius, to which it may have recourse, as a wealth which it can accumulate unperceivably amidst the ordinary expenditure. Locke taught us the first rudiments of this art, when he showed us how he stored his thoughts and his facts, by an artificial arrangement; and Addison, before he commenced his Spectators, had amassed three folios of materials; but the higher step will be the volume which shall give an account of a man to himself, where a single observation, a chronicled emotion, a hope or a project, on which the soul may still hang, like a clew of past knowledge in his hand, will restore to him all his lost studies; his evanescent existence again enters into his life, and he will contemplate on himself as an entire man: to preserve the past, is half of immortality.

The memorials of Gibbon and Priestly present us with the experience and the habits of the literary Character. "What I have known," says Dr. Priestly, "with respect to myself, has tended much to lessen both my admiration and my contempt of others. Could we have

entered into the mind of Sir Isaac Newton, and have traced all the steps by which he produced his great works, we might see nothing very extraordinary in the process." Our student, with an ingenuous simplicity, opens to us that "variety of mechanical expedients by which he secured and arranged his thoughts," and that discipline of the mind, by a peculiar arrangement of his studies, for the day and for the year, in which he rivalled the calm and unalterable system pursued by Gibbon. Buffon and Voltaire employed the same manœuvres, and often only combined the knowledge they obtained, by humble methods. They knew what to ask for, and made use of an intelligent secretary; aware, as Lord Bacon has expressed it, that some Books "may be read by deputy." Buffon laid down an excellent rule to obtain originality, when he advised the writer, first to exhaust his own thoughts before he attempted to consult other writers. The advice of Lord Bacon, that we should pursue our studies, whether the mind is disposed or indisposed, is excellent; in the one case, we shall gain a great step, and in the other, we "shall work out the knots and stands of the mind, and make the middle times the more pleasant." John Hunter very happily illustrated the advantages, which every one derives from putting

his thoughts in writing ; “ it resembles,” said he “ a tradesman taking stock ; without which, he never knows either what he possesses, or in what he is deficient.” Industry is the feature by which the ancients so frequently describe an eminent character ; such phrases as “ *incredibili industria ; diligentia singulari,*” are usual. When we reflect on the magnitude of the labours of Cicero, Erasmus, Gesner, Baronius, Lord Bacon, Usher, and Bayle, we seem asleep at the base of these monuments of study, and scarcely awakened to admire. Such are the laborious instructors of mankind !

Nor let those other artists of the mind, who work in the airy looms of fancy and wit, imagine that they are weaving their webs, without the direction of a principle, and without a secret habit which they have acquired ; there may be even an art, unperceived by themselves, in opening and pursuing a scene of pure invention, and even in the happiest turns of wit. One who had all the experience of such an artist, has employed the very terms we have used, of “ mechanical” and “ habitual.” “ Be assured,” says Goldsmith, “ that wit is in some measure mechanical ; and that a man long habituated to catch at even its resemblance, will at last be

happy enough to possess the substance. By a long habit of writing, he acquires a justness of thinking, and a mastery of manner, which holiday writers, even with ten times his genius, may vainly attempt to equal." Even in the sublime efforts of imagination, this art of meditation may be practised; and Alfieri has shown us, that in those energetic tragic dramas which were often produced in a state of enthusiasm, he pursued a regulated process. "All my tragedies have been composed three times," and he describes the three stages of conception, development, and versifying. "After these three operations, I proceed like other authors, to polish, correct or amend."

"All is habit in mankind, even virtue itself!" exclaimed Metastasio; and we may add, even the meditations of genius. Some of its boldest conceptions are indeed fortuitous, starting up and vanishing almost in the perception; like that giant form, sometimes seen amidst the glaciers, opposite the traveller, afar from him moving as he moves, stopping as he stops, yet, in a moment lost, and perhaps never more seen, —although but his own reflection! Often in the still obscurity of the night, the ideas, the studies, the whole history of the day is acted over again,

and in these vivid reveries, we are converted into spectators. A great poetical contemporary of our country does not think that even his dreams should pass away unnoticed, and keeps, what he calls, a register of nocturnals. The historian De Thou was one of those great literary characters, who, all his life, was preparing to write the history which he wrote; omitting nothing, in his travels and his embassies, which went to the formation of a great man, De Thou has given a very curious account of his dreams. Such was his passion for study, and his ardent admiration of the great men whom he conversed with, that he often imagined in his sleep, that he was travelling in Italy, in Germany, and in England, where he saw and consulted the learned, and examined their curious libraries; he had all his life time these literary dreams, but more particularly when in his travels, he thus repeated the images of the day. If memory does not chain down these hurrying, fading children of the imagination, and

“Snatch the faithless fugitives to light”

Pleasures of Memory.

with the beams of the morning, the mind suddenly finds itself forsaken and solitary. Rous-

seau has uttered a complaint on this occasion: full of enthusiasm, he devoted to the subject of his thoughts, as was his custom, the long sleepless intervals of his nights, meditating in bed, with his eyes closed, he turned over his periods, in a tumult of ideas; but when he rose and had dressed, all was vanished, and when he sat down to his papers, he had nothing to write. Thus genius has its vespers, and its vigils, as well as its matins, which we have been so often told are the true hours of its inspiration—but every hour may be full of inspiration for him who knows to meditate. No man was more practised in this art of the mind, than Pope, and even the night was not an unregarded portion of his poetical existence.

Few works of magnitude presented themselves at once, in their extent and their associations to their authors; the man of genius perceives not more than two or three striking circumstances, unobserved by another; in revolving the subject, the whole mind is gradually agitated; it is a summer landscape, at the break of day, wrapt in mist, where the sun strikes on a single object, till the light and warmth increasing, all starts up in the noon-day of imagination. How beautifully this state of the mind, in the progress of

composition, is described by Dryden, alluding to his work, "when it was only a confused mass of thoughts, tumbling over one another in the dark; when the fancy was yet in its first work, moving the sleeping images of things, towards the light, there to be distinguished, and then either to be chosen or rejected, by the judgment." At that moment, he adds, "I was in that eagerness of imagination, which, by over-pleasing fanciful men, flatters them into the danger of writing." Gibbon tells us of his history, "at the onset, all was dark and doubtful; even the title of the work, the true era of the decline and fall of the empire, &c. I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years." Winckelman was long lost in composing his "History of Art;" a hundred fruitless attempts were made, before he could discover a plan amidst the labyrinth. Slight conceptions kindle finished works: a lady asking for a few verses on rural topics, of the Abbé De Lille, his specimens pleased, and sketches heaped on sketches, produced "Les Jardins. In writing the "Pleasures of Memory," the poet at first proposed a simple description in a few lines, till conducted by meditation, the perfect composition of several years closed in that fine poem. And thus it happened with the Rape of the Lock, and many celebrated productions.

Were it possible to collect some thoughts of great thinkers, which were never written, we should discover vivid conceptions, and an originality they never dared to pursue in their works! Artists have this advantage over authors, that their virgin fancies, their chance felicities, which labour cannot afterwards produce, are constantly perpetuated; and these "studies" as they are called, are as precious to posterity, as their more complete designs. We possess one remarkable evidence of these fortuitous thoughts of genius Pope and Swift, being in the country together. observed, that if contemplative men were to notice "the thoughts which suddenly present themselves to their minds, when walking in the fields, &c. they might find many as well worth preserving, as some of their more deliberate reflexions." They made a trial, and agreed to write down such involuntary thoughts as occurred during their stay there; these furnished out the "Thoughts" in Pope's and Swift's miscellanies.* Among Lord Bacon's Remains, we find a paper entitled "*sudden thoughts, set down for profit.*" At all hours, by the side of Voltaire's bed, or on

* This anecdote is found in Ruffhead's life of Pope, evidently given by Warburton, as was every thing of personal knowledge in that tasteless volume of a mere lawyer, writing the life of a poet.

his table, stood his pen and ink, with slips of paper. The margins of his books were covered with his "sudden thoughts." Cicero, in reading, constantly took notes and made comments; but we must recollect there is an art of reading, as well as an art of thinking.

This art of meditation may be exercised at all hours and in all places; and men of genius in their walks, at table, and amidst assemblies, turning the eye of the mind inwards, can form an artificial solitude; retired amidst a crowd, and wise amidst distraction and folly. Some of the great actions of men of this habit of mind, were first meditated on, amidst the noise of a convivial party, or the music of a concert. The victory of Waterloo might have been organized in the ball room at Brussels, as Rodney at the table of Lord Sandwich, while the bottle was briskly circulating, was observed arranging bits of cork; his solitary amusement having excited an inquiry, he said that he was practising a plan how to annihilate an enemy's fleet; this afterwards proved to be that discovery of breaking the line, which the happy audacity of the hero executed. Thus Hogarth, with an eye always awake to the ridiculous, would catch a character on his thumb-nail; Leonardo da Vinci could detect in

the stains of an old weather-beaten wall, the landscapes of nature, and Haydn carefully noted down in a pocket book, the passages and ideas which came to him in his walks, or amidst company.

To this habit of continuity of attention, tracing the first simple idea through its remoter consequences, Galileo and Newton owed many of their discoveries. It was one evening in the cathedral of Pisa, that Galileo observed the vibrations of a brass lustre pendent from the vaulted roof, which had been left swinging by one of the vergers; the habitual meditation of genius combined with an ordinary accident a new idea of science, and hence, conceived the invention of measuring time by the medium of a pendulum. Who but a genius of this order, sitting in his orchard, and being struck by the fall of an apple, could have discovered a new quality in matter by the system of gravitation; or have imagined, while viewing boys blowing soap-bladders, the properties of light, and then anatomised a ray! It was the same principle which led Franklin when on board a ship, observing a partial stillness in the waves, when they threw down water which had been used for culinary purposes, to the discovery of the wonderful property in oil

of calming the agitated ocean, and many a ship has been preserved in tempestuous weather, or a landing facilitated on a dangerous surf, by this simple meditation of genius.

In the stillness of meditation the mind of genius must be frequently thrown; it is a kind of darkness which hides from us all surrounding objects, even in the light of day. This is the first state of existence in genius.—In Cicero, on Old Age, we find Cato admiring that Caius Sulpitius Gallus, who when he sat down to write in the morning was surprised by the evening, and when he took up his pen in the evening, was surprized by the appearance of the morning. Socrates has remained a whole day in immoveable meditation, his eyes and countenance directed to one spot as if in the stillness of death. La Fontaine, when writing his comic tales, has been observed early in the morning and late in the evening, in the same recumbent posture under the same tree. This quiescent state is a sort of enthusiasm, and renders every thing that surrounds us as distant as if an immense interval separated us from the scene. Poggius has told us of Dante, that he indulged his meditations more strongly than any man he knew; and when once deeply engaged in reading he seemed to live

only in his ideas. The poet went to view a public procession, and having entered a bookseller's shop, taking up a book he sunk into a reverie; on his return he declared that he had neither seen nor heard a single occurrence in the public exhibition which had passed before him. It has been told of a modern astronomer, that ⁽ⁿ⁾ one summer night when he was withdrawing to his chamber, the brightness of the heavens showed a phenomenon. He passed the whole night in observing it; and when they came to him early in the morning, and found him in the same attitude, he said, like one who had been recollecting his thoughts for a few moments, "It must be thus; but I'll go to bed before it is late." He had gazed the entire night in meditation, and was not aware of it.

There is nothing incredible in the stories related of some who have experienced this entranced state, in a very extraordinary degree; that ecstasy in study, where the mind deliciously inebriated with the object it contemplates, feels nothing, from the excess of feeling, as a philosopher well describes it:—Archimedes, involved in the investigation of mathematical truth, and the painters Protogenes and Parmeggiano, found their senses locked up as it were in meditation, so as to be incapable of withdrawing themselves

from their work even in the midst of the terrors and storming of the place by the enemy. Marino was so absorbed in the composition of his "Adonis," that he suffered his leg to be burnt for some time before the pain grew stronger than the intellectual pleasure of his imagination. Thomas, an intense thinker, would sit for hours against a hedge, composing with a low voice, taking the same pinch of snuff for half an hour together, without being aware that it had long disappeared; when he quitted his apartment, after prolonging his studies there, a visible alteration was observed in his person, and the agitation of his recent thoughts was still traced in his air and manner. With what eloquent truth has Buffon described those reveries of the student, which compress his day, and mark the hours by the sensations of minutes. "Invention," he says, "depends on patience; contemplate your subject long, it will gradually unfold till a sort of electric spark convulses for a moment the brain, and spreads down to the very heart a glow of irritation. Then come the luxuries of genius, the true hours for production and composition; hours so delightful that I have spent twelve or fourteen successively at my writing-desk, and still been in a state of pleasure."

This eager delight of pursuing his study, and this impatience of interruption in the pursuit, are finely described by Milton in a letter to his friend Deodati.

“Such is the character of my mind, that no delay, none of the ordinary cessations (for rest or otherwise) no, I had nearly said, care or thinking of the very subject, can hold me back from being hurried on to the destined point, and from completing the great circuit, as it were, of the study in which I am engaged.”*

Such is the picture of genius, viewed in the stillness of meditation, but there is yet a more excited state,—when, as if consciousness were mixing with its reveries, in the allusion of a scene, a person, a passion, the emotions of the soul affect even the organs of sense. It is experienced in the moments the man of genius is producing; these are the hours of inspiration, and this is the gentle enthusiasm of genius!

* *Meum sic est ingenium, nulla ut mora, nulla quies, nulla terme illius rei cura aut cogitatio distineat, quoad pervadam quo feror, et grandem aliquem studiorum meorum quasi periodum conficiam.*”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ENTHUSIASM OF GENIUS.

A STATE of mind occurs in the most active operations of genius, which the term *reverie* inadequately indicates; metaphysical distinctions but ill describe it, and popular language affords no terms for those faculties and feelings which escape the observation of the multitude who are not affected by the phenomenon.

The illusion of a drama, over persons of great sensibility, where all the senses are excited by a mixture of reality with imagination, is experienced by men of genius in their own vivified ideal world; real emotions are raised by fiction. In a scene, apparently passing in their presence, where the whole train of circumstances succeeds in all the continuity of nature, and a sort of real existences appear to rise up before them, they perceive themselves spectators or actors, feel their sympathies excited, and involuntarily use

language and gestures, while the exterior organs of sense are visibly affected; not that they are spectators and actors, nor that the scene exists. In this equivocal state, the enthusiast of genius produces his master-pieces. This waking dream is distinct from reverie, where our thoughts wandering without connection, the faint impressions are so evanescent as to occur without even being recollected. Not so when one closely pursued act of meditation carries the enthusiast of genius beyond the precinct of actual existence, while this act of contemplation makes the thing contemplated. He is now the busy painter of a world which he himself only views; alone he hears, he sees, he touches, he laughs and weeps; his brows and lips, and his very limbs move. Poets and even painters, who as Lord Bacon describes witches, "are imaginative," have often involuntarily betrayed in the act of composition those gestures which accompany this enthusiasm. Quintillian has nobly compared them to the lashings of the lion's tail preparing to combat. Even actors of genius have accustomed themselves to walk on the stage for an hour before the curtain was drawn, to fill their minds with all the phantom's of the drama, to personify, to catch the passion, to speak to others,

to do all that a man of genius would have viewed in the subject.

Aware of this peculiar faculty so prevalent in the more vivid exercise of genius, Lord Kaimes seems to have been the first who, in a work on criticism, attempted to name it *the ideal presence*, to distinguish it from the *real presence* of things; it has been called the representative faculty, the imaginative state, &c. Call it what we will, no term opens to us the invisible mode of its operations, or expresses its variable nature. Conscious of the existence of such a faculty, our critic perceived that the conception of it is by no means clear when described in words. Has not the difference of any actual thing and its image in a glass perplexed some philosophers? and it is well known how far the ideal philosophy has been carried. "All are pictures, alike painted on the retina, or optical sensorium!" exclaimed the enthusiast Barry, who only saw pictures in nature and nature in pictures.

Cold and barren tempers without imagination, whose impressions of objects never rise beyond those of memory and reflection, which know only to compare, and not to excite, will smile at this

equivocal state of the ideal presence ; yet it is a real one to the enthusiast of genius, and it is his happiest and peculiar condition—without this power no metaphysical aid, no art to be taught him, no mastery of talent shall avail him ; unblest with it the votary shall find each sacrifice lying cold on the altar, for no accepting flame from heaven shall kindle it.

This enthusiasm indeed can only be discovered by men of genius themselves, yet when most under its influence, they can least perceive it, as the eye which sees all things cannot view itself ; and to trace this invisible operation, this warmth on the nerve, were to search for the principle of life which found would cease to be life. There is however something of reality in this state of the ideal presence ; for the most familiar instances show that the nerves of each external sense are put in motion by the idea of the object, as if the real object had been presented to it ; the difference is only in the degree. Thus the exterior senses are more concerned in the ideal world than at first appears ; we thrill at even the idea of any thing that makes us shudder, and only imagining it often produces a real pain. A curious consequence flows from this principle : Milton, lingering amidst the freshness of nature

in Eden, felt all the delights of those elements with which he was creating; his nerves moved with the images which excited them. The fierce and wild Dante amidst the abysses of his Inferno, must often have been startled by its horrors, and often left his bitter and gloomy spirit in the stings he inflicted on the great criminal. The moving nerves then of the man of genius are a reality; he sees, he hears, he feels by each. How mysterious to us is the operation of this faculty: a Homer and a Richardson,* like Nature, open a volume large as life itself—embracing a circuit of human existence!

Can we doubt of the reality of this faculty, when the visible and outward frame of the man of genius bears witness to its presence? When Fielding said “I do not doubt but the most pathetic and affecting scenes have been writ with tears,” he probably drew that discovery from an inverse feeling to his own. Fielding would have been gratified to have confirmed the

* Richardson assembles a family about him, writing down what they said, seeing their very manner of saying, living with them as often and as long as he wills—with such a personal unity, that an ingenious lawyer once told me that he required no stronger evidence of a fact in any court of law than a circumstantial scene in Richardson.

observation by facts which never reached him. Metastasio, in writing the ninth scene of the second act of his *Olympiad*, found himself suddenly moved—shedding tears. 'The imagined sorrows inspired real tears; and they afterwards proved contagious. Had our poet not perpetuated his surprise by an interesting sonnet, the circumstance had passed away with the emotion, as many such have. Alfieri, the most energetic poet of modern times, having composed, without a pause, the whole of an act, noted in the margin—"Written under a paroxysm of enthusiasm, and while shedding a flood of tears." The impressions which the frame experiences in this state, leave deeper traces behind them than those of reverie. The tremors of Dryden, after having written an ode, a circumstance accidentally preserved, were not unusual with him—for in the preface to his *Tales* he tells us, that "in translating Homer he found greater pleasure than in Virgil; but it was not a pleasure without pain; the continual agitation of the spirits must needs be a weakener to any constitution, especially in age, and many pauses are required for refreshment betwixt the heats." We find Metastasio, like others of the brotherhood, susceptible of this state, complaining of his sufferings during the

poetical æstus. "When I apply with attention, the nerves of my sensorium are put into a violent tumult; I grow as red as a drunkard, and am obliged to quit my work." When Buffon was absorbed on a subject which presented great objections to his opinions, he felt his head burn, and saw his countenance flushed; and this was a warning for him to suspend his attention. Gray could never compose voluntarily; his genius resembled the armed apparition in Shakespeare's master tragedy. "He would not be commanded," as we are told by Mr. Mathias. When he wished to compose the Installation Ode, for a considerable time he felt himself without the power to begin it: a friend calling on him, Gray flung open his door hastily, and in a hurried voice and tone exclaiming, in the first verse of that ode,

"Hence, avaunt! 'tis holy ground!"—

his friend started at the disordered appearance of the bard, whose orgasm had disturbed his very air and countenance, till he recovered himself. Listen to one labouring with all the magic of the spell. Madam Roland has thus powerfully described the ideal presence in her first readings of Telemachus and Tasso:—"My

respiration rose, I felt a rapid fire colouring my face and my voice changing had betrayed my agitation. I was Eucharis for Telemachus, and Erminia for Tancred. However, during this perfect transformation, I did not yet think that I myself was any thing, for any one: the whole had no connection with myself. I sought for nothing around me; I was them; I saw only the objects which existed for them; it was a dream, without being awakened." The effect which the study of Plutarch's illustrious men produced on the mighty mind of Alfieri, during a whole winter, while he lived as it were among the heroes of antiquity, he has himself told. Alfieri wept and raved with grief and indignation that he was born under a government which favoured no Roman heroes nor sages; as often as he was struck with the great actions of these great men, in his extreme agitation he rose from his seat like one possessed. The feeling of genius in Alfieri was suppressed for more than twenty years, by the discouragement of his uncle; but as the natural temperament cannot be crushed out of the soul of genius, he was a poet without writing a single verse; and as a great poet, the ideal presence at times became ungovernable and verging to madness. In traversing the wilds of Arragon, his emo-

tions, he says, would certainly have given birth to poetry, could he have expressed himself in verse. It was a complete state of the imaginative existence, or this ideal presence; for he proceeded along the wilds of Arragon in a reverie, weeping and laughing by turns. He considered this as a folly, because it ended in nothing but in laughter and tears. He was not aware that he was then yielding to a demonstration, could he have judged of himself, that he possessed those dispositions of mind and energy of passion which form the poetical character.

Genius creates by a single conception; the statuary conceives the statue at once, which he afterwards executes by the slow process of art; and the architect contrives a whole palace in an instant. In a single principle, opening as it were on a sudden to genius, a great and new system of things is discovered. It has happened, sometimes, that this single conception, rushing over the whole concentrated soul of genius, has agitated the frame convulsively; it comes like a whispered secret from Nature. When Mallebranche first took up Descartes's treatise on Man, the germ of his own subsequent philosophic system, such was his intense feeling, that a violent

palpitation of the heart, more than once, obliged him to lay down the volume. When the first idea of the *Essay on the Arts and Sciences* rushed on the mind of Rousseau, a feverish symptom in his nervous system approached to a slight delirium: stopping under an oak, he wrote with a pencil the *Prosopopeiæ* of Fabricius.—“I still remember my solitary transport at the discovery of a philosophical argument against the doctrine of transubstantiation,” exclaimed Gibbon in his *Memoirs*.

This quick sensibility of genius has suppressed the voices of poets in reciting their most pathetic passages.—Thomson was so oppressed by a passage in Virgil or Milton, when he attempted to read, that “his voice sunk in ill-articulated sounds from the bottom of his breast.” The tremulous figure of the ancient Sybil appears to have been viewed in that land of the Muses, by the energetic description of Paulus Jovius of the impetus and afflatus of one of the Italian improvisatori, some of whom, I have heard from one present at a similar exhibition, have not degenerated in poetic inspiration, nor in its corporeal excitement. “His eyes fixed downwards, kindle, as he gives utterance to his effusions, the moist drops flow down his cheeks, the veins of his fore-

head swell, and wonderfully his learned ears, as it were, abstracted and intent, moderate each impulse of his flowing numbers.”*

This enthusiasm throws the man of genius into those reveries where, amidst Nature, while others are terrified at destruction, he can only view Nature herself. The mind of Pliny, to add one more chapter to his mighty scroll, sought her amidst the volcano in which he perished. Vernet was on board a ship in the midst of a raging tempest, and all hope was given up: the astonished captain beheld the artist of genius, his pencil in his hand, in calm enthusiasm, sketching the terrible world of waters—studying the wave that was rising to devour him.

There is a tender enthusiasm in the elevated studies of antiquity, in which the ideal presence or the imaginative existence is seen prevailing over the mind. It is finely said by Livy, that “in contemplating antiquity, the mind itself becomes antique.” Amidst the monuments of great and departed nations, our imagination is touched

* The passage is curious.—“Canenti defixi exardent oculi, sudores manant, frontis venæ contumescunt, et quod mirum est, eruditæ aures tanquam alienæ et intentæ omnem impetum profluentium numerorum exactissimâ ratione moderantur.”

by the grandeur of local impressions, and the vivid associations of the manners, the arts, and the individuals, of a great people. Men of genius have roved amidst the awful ruins till the ideal presence has fondly 'built up the city anew, and have become Romans in the Rome of two thousand years past. Pomponius Lætus, who devoted his life to this study, was constantly seen wandering amidst the vestiges of this "throne of the world:" there, in many a reverie, as his eye rested on the mutilated arch and the broken column, he stopped to muse, and dropt tears in the ideal presence of Rome and of the Romans. Another enthusiast of this class was Bosius, who sought beneath Rome for another Rome, in those catacombs built by the early Christians, for their asylum and their sepulchres. His work of "Roma Sotteranea" is the production of a subterraneous life, passed in fervent and perilous labours. Taking with him a hermit's meal for the week, this new Pliny often descended into the bowels of the earth, by lamp-light, clearing away the sand and ruins, till some tomb broke forth, or some inscription became legible: accompanied by some friend whom his enthusiasm had inspired with his own sympathy, here he dictated his notes, tracing the mouldering sculpture, and catching the fading picture. Thrown back into the primitive ages of

Christianity, amidst the local impressions, the historian of the Christian catacombs collected the memorials of an age and of a race, which were hidden beneath the earth.

Werner, the mineralogist, celebrated for his lectures, by some accounts transmitted by his auditors, appears to have exercised this faculty. Werner often said that "he always depended on the muse for inspiration." His unwritten lecture was a reverie—till kindling in his progress, blending science and imagination in the grandeur of his conceptions, at times, as if he had gathered about him the very elements of Nature, his spirit seemed to be hovering over the waters and the strata.

It is this enthusiasm which inconceivably fills the mind of genius in all great and solemn operations: it is an agitation in calmness, and is required not only in the fine arts, but wherever a great and continued exertion of the soul must be employed. It was experienced by De Thou, the historian, when after his morning prayers he always added another to implore the Divinity to purify his heart from partiality and hatred, and to open his spirit in developing the truth, amidst the contending factions of his times; and by Haydn, when employed in his "Crea-

tion," earnestly addressing the Creator ere he struck his instrument. In moments like these, man becomes a perfect unity—one thought and one act, abstracted from all other thoughts and all other acts. It was felt by Gray in his loftiest excursions, and is perhaps the same power which impels the villager, when, to overcome his rivals in a contest for leaping, he retires back some steps, collects all exertion into his mind, and clears the eventful bound. One of our Admirals in the reign of Elizabeth, held as a maxim, that a height of passion, amounting to phrenzy, was necessary to qualify a man for that place; and Nelson, decorated by all his honours about him, on the day of battle, at the sight of those emblems of glory emulated himself. This enthusiasm was necessary and effective for his genius.

This enthusiasm, prolonged as it often has been by the operation of the imaginative existence becomes a state of perturbed feeling, and can only be distinguished from a disordered intellect by the power of volition, in a sound mind, of withdrawing from the ideal world into the world of sense. It is but a step which carries us from the wanderings of fancy into the aberrations of delirium.

“ With curious art the brain too finely wrought
 Preys on herself, and is destroyed by thought ;
 Constant attention wears the active mind,
 Blots out her powers, and leaves a blank behind—
 The greatest genius to this fate may bow.”

Churchill.

There may be an agony in thought which only deep thinkers experience. The terrible effects of metaphysical studies on Beattie, has been told by himself.—“ Since the *Essay on Truth* was printed in quarto, I have never *dared* to read it over. I durst not even read the sheets to see whether there were any errors in the print, and was obliged to get a friend to do that office for me. These studies came in time to have dreadful effects upon my nervous system ; and I cannot read what I then wrote without some degree of horror, because it-recalls to my mind the horrors that I have sometimes felt after passing a long evening in those severe studies.” Goldoni, after a rash exertion of writing sixteen plays in a year, confesses he paid the penalty of the folly ; he flew to Genoa, leading a life of delicious vacuity ; to pass the day without doing any thing, was all the enjoyment he was now capable of feeling. But long after he said, “ I felt at that time, and have ever since continued to feel, the consequence of that exhaustion of spirits I sustained in com-

posing my sixteen comedies." Boerhaave has related of himself, that having imprudently indulged in intense thought on a particular subject, he did not close his eyes for six weeks after : and Tissot, in his work on the health of men of letters, abounds in similar cases, where a complete stupor has affected the unhappy student for a period of six months.

Assuredly the finest geniuses could not always withdraw themselves from that intensely interesting train of ideas, which we have shown has not been removed from about them by even the violent stimuli of exterior objects ; the scenical illusion,—the being of their passion,—the invisible existences repeatedly endowed by them with a vital force, have still hung before their eyes. It was in this state that Petrarch found himself in that minute narrative of a vision in which Laura appeared to him ; and Tasso in the lofty conversations he held with a spirit that glided towards him on the beams of the sun : and thus, Mallebranche listening to the voice of God within him ; or Lord Herbert on his knees, in the stillness of the sky ; or Páschal starting at times at an abyss opening by his side. Descartes, when young, and in a country seclusion, his brain exhausted with meditation, and his imagination heated to

excess, heard a voice in the air which called him to pursue the search of truth; he never doubted the vision, and this dream in the delirium of genius charmed him even in his after-studies. Our Collins and Cowper were often thrown into that extraordinary state of mind, when the ideal presence converted them into visionaries; and their illusions were as strong as Swedenburgh's, who saw heaven on earth in the glittering streets of his New Jerusalem, and Cardan's, when he so carefully observed a number of little armed men at his feet; and Benvenuto Cellini, whose vivid imagination and glorious egotism so frequently contemplated "a resplendent light hovering over his shadow."

Yet what less than enthusiasm is the purchase-price of high passion and invention? Perhaps never has there been a man of genius of this rare cast, who has not betrayed early in youth the ebullitions of the imagination in some outward action at that period, when the illusions of life are more real to them than its realities. A slight derangement of our accustomed habits, a little perturbation of the faculties, and a romantic tinge on the feelings, give no indifferent promise of genius; of that generous temper which knows nothing of the baseness of mankind, unsatisfied, and raging

with a devouring eagerness for the aliment it has not yet found ; to perfect some glorious design, to charm the world, or make it happier. Often we hear from the confessions of men of genius, of their having indulged in the puerile state the most noble, the most delightful, the most impossible projects ; and if age ridicules the imaginative existence of its youth, be assured that it is the decline of its genius. That virtuous and tender enthusiast, Fenelon, in his early youth, troubled his friends with a classical and religious reverie. He was on the point of quitting them to restore the independence of Greece, in the character of a missionary, and to collect the relics of antiquity with the taste of a classical antiquary. The Peloponnesus opened to him the Church of Corinth, where St. Paul preached, the Piræus where Socrates conversed ; while the latent poet was to pluck laurels from Delphos, and rove amidst the amenities of Tempe. Such was the influence of the ideal presence ! and barren will be his imagination, and luckless his fortune, who, claiming the honours of genius, has never been touched by such a temporary delirium.

To this enthusiasm, and to this alone, can we attribute the self-immolation of men of genius. Mighty and laborious works have been pursued,

as a forlorn hope, at the certain destruction of the fortune of the individual. The fate of Castell's Lexicon,* of Bloch's magnificent work on Fishes, and other great and similar labours, attest the enthusiasm which accompanied their progress. They have sealed their works with their blood: they have silently borne the pangs of disease; they have barred themselves from the pursuits of fortune; they have torn themselves away from all they loved in life, patiently suffering these self-denials, to escape from those interruptions and impediments to their studies. Martyrs of literature and art, they behold in their solitude that halo of immortality over their studious heads, which is a reality to the visionary of glory. Milton would not desist from proceeding with one of his works, although warned by the physician of the certain loss of his sight; he declared he preferred his duty to his eyes, and doubtless his fame to his comfort. Anthony Wood, to preserve the

* Castell lost 12000*l.* by this great work; and gave away copies, while the rest rotted at home. He exhibits a curious picture of literary labour in his preface—"As for myself, I have been unceasingly occupied for such a number of years in this mass—*Molendino* he calls them—that day seemed as it were a holiday in which I have not laboured so much as sixteen or eighteen hours in these enlarging Lexicons and Polyglot Bibles." Bloch expended all his fortune in his splendid work.

lives of others, voluntarily resigned his own to cloistered studies ; nor did the literary passion desert him in his last moments, when with his dying hands he still grasped his beloved papers, and his last mortal thoughts dwelt on his *Athenæ Oxonienses*.* Moreri, the founder of our great biographical collections, conceived the design with such enthusiasm, and found such voluptuousness in the labour, that he willingly withdrew from the popular celebrity he had acquired as a preacher, and the preferment which a minister of state, in whose house he resided, would have opened to his views. After the first edition of his *Historical Dictionary*, he had nothing so much at heart as its improvement. His unyielding application was converting labour into death ; but collecting his last renovated vigour, with his dying hands he gave the volume to the world, though he did not live to witness even its publication. All objects in life appeared mean to him compared with that exalted delight of addressing to the literary men of his age, the history of their brothers. The same enthusiasm consumes the pupils of art devoured by their own ardour. The young and classical sculptor, who raised the statue of Charles II. placed in the centre of the Royal Exchange,

* See *Calamities of Authors*, vol. i. p. 243.

was, in the midst of his work, advised by his medical friends to desist from marble; for the energy of his labour, with the strong excitement of his feelings, already had made fatal inroads in his constitution. But he was willing, he said, to die at the foot of his statue. The statue was raised, and the young sculptor, with the shining eyes and hectic blush of consumption, beheld it there—returned home—and shortly was no more. Drouais, a pupil of David, the French painter, was a youth of fortune, but the solitary pleasure of his youth was his devotion to Raphael; he was at his studies at four in the morning till night; "Painting, or Nothing!" was the cry of this enthusiast of elegance; "First fame, then amusement," was another. His sensibility was great as his enthusiasm; and he cut in pieces the picture for which David declared he would inevitably obtain the prize. "I have had my reward in your approbation; but next year I shall feel more certain of deserving it," was the reply of this young enthusiast. Afterwards he astonished Paris with his *Marius*—but while engaged on a subject which he could never quit, the principle of life itself was drying up in his veins. Henry Headly and Kirke White were the early victims of the enthusiasm of study;

and are mourned for ever by the few who are organised like themselves.

“ ’Twas thine own genius gave the fatal blow,
And helped to plant the wound that laid thee low ;
So the struck eagle, stretched upon the plain
No more through rolling clouds to soar again,
Viewed his own feather on the fatal dart,
And winged the shaft that quivered in his heart ;
Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel
He nursed the pinion which impelled the steel,
While the same plumage that had warmed his nest,
Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast.”

English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.

Thus comes the shadow of death among those who are existing with more than life about them. Yet “ there is no celebrity for the artist,” said Gesner, “ if the love of his own heart does not become a vehement passion ; if the hours he employs to cultivate it are not for him the most delicious ones of his life ; if study becomes not his true existence and his first happiness ; if the society of his brothers in art is not that which most pleases him ; if even in the night-time the ideas of his art do not occupy his vigils or his dreams ; if in the morning he flies not to his work with a new rapture. These are the marks of him who labours for true glory and posterity ; but if he seek only to please the taste of his age,

his works will not kindle the desires nor touch the hearts of those who love the arts and the artists."

Unaccompanied by enthusiasm, genius will produce nothing but uninteresting works of art; not a work of art, resembling the dove of Archidas, which other artists beheld flying, but could not make another dove to meet it in the air. Enthusiasm is the secret spirit which hovers over the production of genius, throwing the reader of a book, or the spectator of a statue, into the very ideal presence whence these works have really originated. A great work always leaves us in a state of musing.

CHAPTER IX.

LITERARY JEALOUSY.

JEALOUSY, long declared to be the offspring of little minds, is not, however, restricted to them; it fiercely rages in the literary republic, among the Senate and the Order of Knights, as well as the people. In that curious self-description which Linnæus comprised in a single page, written with the precision of a naturalist, that great man discovered that his constitution was liable to be afflicted with jealousy. Literary jealousy seems often proportioned to the degree of genius; the shadowy and equivocal claims of literary honour is the real cause of this terrible fear; in cases where the object is more palpable and definite, and the pre-eminence is more universal, than intellectual excellence can be, jealousy will not so strongly affect the claimant for our admiration. The most beautiful woman, in the age of beauty, will be rarely jealous: seldom

she encounters a rival; and while her claims exist, who can contend with a fine feature or a dissolving glance? But a man of genius has no other existence than in the opinion of the world; a divided empire would obscure him, a contested one might annihilate him.

The lives of authors and artists exhibit a most painful disease in that jealousy which is the perpetual fever of their existence. Why does Plato never mention Zenophon, and why does Zenophon inveigh against Plato, studiously collecting every little report which may detract from his fame? They wrote on the same subject! Why did Corneille, tottering on the grave, when Racine consulted him on his first tragedy, advise the author never to write another? Why does Voltaire continually detract from the sublimity of Corneille, the sweetness of Racine, and the fire of Crebillon? Why, when Boccaccio sent to Petrarch a copy of Dante, declaring that the work was like a first light which had illuminated his mind, did Petrarch coldly observe that he had not been anxious to inquire after it, having intended to compose in the vernacular idiom and not wishing to be considered as a plagiarist; while he only allows Dante's superiority from having written in the vulgar idiom, which he did not think was an enviable,

but an inferior merit. Thus frigidly Petrarch took the altitude of the solitary Ætna before him, in the "Inferno," while he shrunk into himself with the painful consciousness of the existence of another poet, who obscured his own solitary majesty. Why is Waller silent on the merits of Cowley, and why does he not give one verse to return the praise with which Dryden honoured him, while he is warm in panegyric on Beaumont and Fletcher, on Sandys, Ware, and D'Avenant? Because of some of these their species of composition was different from his own, and the rest he could not fear.

The moral feeling has often been found too weak to temper the malignancy of literary jealousy, and has led some men of genius to an incredible excess. A memorable and recent example offers in the history of the two brothers, Dr. William, and John Hunter, both great characters, fitted to be rivals, but Nature, it was imagined, in the tenderness of blood had placed a bar to rivalry. John, without any determined pursuit in his youth, was received by his brother at the height of his celebrity; the Doctor initiated him into his school; they performed their experiments together; and William Hunter was the first to announce to the world the great

genius of his brother. After this close connection in all their studies and discoveries, Dr. William Hunter published his magnificent work—the proud favourite of his heart, the assertor of his fame. Was it credible that the genius of the celebrated anatomist, which had been nursed under the wing of his brother, should turn on that wing to clip it? John Hunter put in his claim to the chief discovery; it was answered by his brother. The Royal Society, to whom they appealed, concealed the documents of this unnatural feud. The blow was felt, and the jealousy of literary honour for ever separated the brothers, and the brothers of genius.*

In the jealousy of genius, however, there is a peculiar case, where the fever rages not in its malignancy, yet silently consumes. Even the man of genius of the gentlest temper dies under its slow wastings; and this infection may happen among dear friends, when a man of genius loses that self-opinion which animated his solitary labours and constituted his happiness—when he views himself at the height of his class, suddenly eclipsed by another great genius. It is then the morbid sensibility, acting on so delicate a frame,

* See Dr. Adams's interesting life of Mr. John Hunter.

feels as if under the old witchcraft of tying the knot on the nuptial day,—the faculties are suddenly extinct by the very imagination. This is the jealousy not of hatred, but of despair. A curious case of this kind appears in the anecdote of the Spanish artist Castillo, a man distinguished by every amiable disposition; he was the great painter of Seville. When some of Morillo's paintings were shown to him, who seems to have been his nephew, he stood in meek astonishment before them, and when he recovered his voice, turning away, he exclaimed with a sigh, *Yà murio Castillo!* Castillo is no more! Returning home the stricken genius relinquished his pencil, and pined away in hopelessness.

CHAPTER X.

WANT OF MUTUAL ESTEEM.

AMONG men of genius that want of mutual esteem, usually attributed to envy or jealousy, often originates in a deficiency of analogous ideas, or sympathy, in the parties. On this principle several curious phenomena in the history of genius may be explained.

Every man of genius has a manner of his own ; a mode of thinking and a habit of style ; and usually decides on a work as it approximates or varies from his own. When one great author depreciates another it has often no worse source than his own taste. The witty Cowley despised the natural Chaucer ; the cold classical Boileau the rough sublimity of Crebillon ; the refining Marivaux the familiar Molière Fielding ridiculed Richardson, whose manner so strongly contrasted with his own ; and Richardson contemned Fielding and declared he would not last. Cumberland

escaped a fit of unforgiveness, not living to read his own character by Bishop Watson, whose logical head tried the lighter elegancies of that polished man by his own nervous genius, destitute of whatever was beautiful in taste. There was no envy in the breast of Johnson when he advised Mrs. Thrale not to purchase Gray's Letters as trifling and dull, no more than in Gray himself when he sunk the poetical character of Shenstone, his simplicity and purity of feeling, by an image of ludicrous contempt. The deficient sympathy in these men of genius, for modes of feeling opposite to their own, was the real cause of their opinions; and thus it happens that even superior genius is so often liable to be unjust and false in its decisions.

The same principle operates still more strikingly in the remarkable contempt of men of genius for those pursuits and the pursuers, which require talents quite distinct from their own, with a cast of mind thrown by nature into another mould. Hence we must not be surprised at the antipathies of Selden and Locke, of Longuerue and Buffon, and this class of genius, against poetry and poets; while on the other side, these undervalue the pursuits of the antiquary, the naturalist, and the metaphysician, by their own favourite

course of imagination. We can only understand in the degree we comprehend; and in both these cases the parties will be found quite deficient in those qualities of genius which constitute the excellence of the other. A professor of polite literature condemned the study of botany, as adapted to mediocrity of talent and only demanding patience; but Linnæus showed how a man of genius becomes a creator even in a science which seems to depend only on order and method. It will not be a question with some whether a man must be endowed with the energy and aptitude of genius, to excel in antiquarianism, in natural history, &c.; and that the prejudices raised against the claims of such to the honours of genius have probably arisen from the secluded nature of their pursuits, and the little knowledge the men of wit and imagination have of these persons, who live in a society of their own. On this subject a very curious circumstance has been revealed of Peiresc, whose enthusiasm for science was long felt throughout Europe; his name was known in every country, and his death was lamented in forty languages; yet was this great man unknown to several men of genius in his own country; Rochefoucauld declared he had never heard of his name, and Malherbe wondered why his death created so universal a sensation. Thus

we see the classes of literature, like the planets of Heaven, revolving like distinct worlds; and it would not be less absurd for the inhabitants of Venus to treat with contempt the powers and faculties of those of Jupiter, than it is for the men of wit and imagination, those of the men of knowledge and curiosity. They are incapable of exerting the peculiar qualities which give a real value to these pursuits, and therefore they must remain ignorant of their nature and their result.

It is not then always envy or jealousy which induce men of genius to undervalue each other; the want of sympathy will sufficiently account for their false judgments. Suppose Newton, Quinault, and Machiavel, accidentally meeting together, unknown to each other, would they not soon have desisted from the vain attempt of communicating their ideas? The philosopher had condemned the poet of the Graces as an intolerable trifler, and the author of the "The Prince" as a dark political spy. Machiavel had conceived Newton to be a dreamer among the stars, and a mere almanack-maker among men; and the other a rhimer, nauseously *doucereux*. Quinault might have imagined he was seated between two madmen. Having annoyed each

other for some time, they would have relieved their *ennui* by reciprocal contempt, and each have parted with a determination to avoid hereafter two disagreeable companions.*

* See Helvetius, De l'Esprit.

CHAPTER XI.

SELF-PRAISE.

VANITY, egotism, a strong sense of their own sufficiency, form another accusation against men of genius; but the complexion of self-praise must alter with the occasion; for the simplicity of truth may appear vanity, and the consciousness of superiority seem envy—to Mediocrity. It is we who do nothing, who cannot even imagine any thing to be done, who are so much displeased with self-lauding, self-love, self-independence, self-admiration, which with the man of genius are nothing but a modification of the passion of glory.

He who exults in himself is at least in earnest; but he who refuses to receive that praise in public for which he has devoted so much labour in his privacy, is not: he is compelled to suppress the very instinct of his nature; for while we censure no man for loving fame, but only

for showing us how much he is possessed by the passion, we allow him to create the appetite, but we deny him the aliment. Our effeminate minds are the willing dupes of what is called the modesty of genius, or, as it has been termed, "the polished reserve of modern times;" and this from the selfish principle that it serves at least to keep out of the company its painful pre-eminence. But this "polished reserve," like something as fashionable, the ladies' rouge, at first appearing with rather too much colour, will in the heat of an evening, be dying away, till the true complexion comes out. We know well the numerous subterfuges of these modest men of genius, to extort that praise from their private circle which is thus openly denied them. Have they not been taken by surprise, enlarging their own panegyric, which might rival Pliny's on Trajan, for care and copiousness? or impudently veiling their naked beauty with the transparency of a third person? or never prefixing their name to the volume, which they would not easily forgive a friend to pass unnoticed.

The love of praise is instinctive in the nature of men of genius. Their praise is the foot on which the past rests, and the wheel on which the

future rolls. The generous qualities and the virtues of a man of genius are really produced by the applause conferred on him. To him whom the world admires, the happiness of the world must be dear, said Madame De Stael. Like the North American Indian, (for the savage and the man of genius preserve the genuine feelings of Nature,) he would listen to his own name, when amidst his circle they chaunt their gods and their heroes. The honest savages laud the worthies among themselves, as well as their departed; and when an auditor hears his own name, he answers by a cry of pleasure and of pride. But pleasure and pride in his own name must raise no emotion in the breast of genius, amidst a polished circle: to bring himself down to them, he must start at a compliment, and turn away even from one of his own votaries.

But this, it seems, is not always the case with men of genius, since the accusation we are noticing has been so often reiterated. Take from some that supreme opinion of themselves, that pride of exultation, and you crush the germ of their excellence. Many vast designs must have perished in the conception, had not their authors breathed this vital air of self-delight, this energy of vanity, so operative in great undertakings.

We have recently seen this principle in the literary character unfold itself in the life of the late Bishop of Landaff: whatever he did, he felt it was done as a master; whatever he wrote, it was as he once declared, the best work on the subject yet written. It was this feeling with which he emulated Cicero in retirement or in action. "When I am dead, you will not soon meet with another John Hunter," said the great anatomist, to one of his garrulous friends. An apology is formed for relating the fact, but the weakness is only in the apology. Corneille has given a very noble full-length of the sublime egotism which accompanied him through life:* and I doubt if we had any such author in the present day, whether he would dare to be so just to himself, and so hardy to the public. The self-praise of Buffon at least equalled his genius; and the inscription beneath his statue in the library of the Jardin des Plantes, which I was told was raised to him in his life time, exceeds all panegyric;—it places him alone in Nature, as the first and the last interpreter of her works. He said of the great geniuses of modern times, that there were not more than five,—“Newton, Bacon, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, and Myself.” It was in this spirit that he con-

* See it versified in *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. ii.

ceived and terminated his great works, that he sat in patient meditation at his desk for half a century, and that all Europe, even in a state of war, bowed to the modern Pliny.

Nor is the vanity of Buffon, and Voltaire, and Rousseau so purely national as some will suppose; for men of genius in all ages have expressed a consciousness of the internal force of genius. No one felt this self-exultation more potent than our Hobbes, who has indeed, in his controversy with Wallis, asserted that there may be nothing more just than self-commendation;* and De Thou, one of the most noble-minded, the most thinking, the most impartial of historians, in the Memoirs of his own life, composed in the third person, has surprised and somewhat puzzled the critics, by that frequent distribution of self-commendation which they knew not how to accord with the modesty and gravity with which he was so amply endowed. After his great and solemn labour, amidst the injustice of his persecutors, that great man had sufficient experience of his own merits to assert them. Kepler, amidst his great discoveries, looks down like a superior being on other men. Thus he

* See Quarrels of Authors, vol. iii. p. 113.

breaks forth in glory and egotism : “ I dare insult mankind by confessing that I am he who has turned science to advantage. If I am pardoned, I shall rejoice ; if blamed, I shall endure it. The die is cast ; I have written this book, and whether it be read by posterity or by my contemporaries, is of no consequence ; it may well wait for a reader during one century, when God himself during six thousand years has waited for an observer like myself.” He predicts that “ his discoveries would be verified in succeeding ages,” yet were Kepler now among us in familiar society, we should be invited to inspect a monster of inordinate vanity. But it was this solitary majesty, this lofty conception of their genius, which hovered over the sleepless pillow, and charmed the solitude, of Bacon, of Newton, of Montesquieu ; of Ben Jonson, of Milton and Corneille ; and of Michael Angelo. Such men of genius anticipate their contemporaries and know they are creators, long before the ready consent of the Public ;

“ They see the laurel which entwines their bust,
They mark the pomp which consecrates their dust,
Shake off the dimness which obscures them now,
And feel the future glory bind their brow.”

Smedley's Prescience.

To be admired, is the noble simplicity of the Ancients in expressing with ardour the consciousness of genius, and openly claiming that praise by which it was nourished. The ancients were not infected by our spurious effeminate modesty. Socrates, on the day of his trial, firmly commended himself: he told the various benefits he had conferred on his country.—“ Instead of condemning me for imaginary crimes, you would do better, considering my poverty, to order me to be maintained out of the public treasury.” Epicurus writing to a minister of state, declares—“ If you desire glory, nothing can bestow it more than the letters I write to you :” and Seneca, in quoting these words, adds—“ What Epicurus promised to his friend, that, my Lucilius, I promise you.” *Orna me!* was the constant cry of Cicero; and he desires the historian Luceius to write separately the conspiracy of Catiline, and publish quickly, that while he yet lived he might taste of the sweetness of his glory. Horace and Ovid were equally sensible to their immortality: but what modern poet would be tolerated with such an avowal? Yet Dryden honestly declares that it was better for him to own this failing of vanity, than the world to do it for him; and adds “ For what other reason have I spent my life in so unprofitable a study? Why am I grown old in

seeking so barrén a reward as fame? The same parts and application which have made me a poet, might have raised me to any honours of the gown." Was not Cervantes very sensible to his own merits, when a rival started up; and did he not assert them too, when passing sentence on the bad books of the times, he distinguishes his own work by a handsome compliment? Nor was Butler less proud of his own merits; for he has done ample justice to his *Hudibras*, and traced out, with great self-delight, its variety of excellencies. Richardson, the novelist, exhibits one of the most striking instances of what is called literary vanity—the delight of an author in his works; he has pointed out all the beauties of his three great works, in various manners.* He always taxed a visitor by one of his long letters. It was this intense self-delight, which produced his voluminous labours.

There are certain authors whose very existence seems to require a high conception of their own talents; and who must, as some animals appear to do, furnish the means of life out of their own substance. These men of genius open their career with peculiar tastes, or, with a predilection for

* I have observed them in *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. ii.

some great work ; in a word, with many unpopular dispositions. Yet we see them magnanimous, though defeated, proceeding with the public feeling against them. At length we view them ranking with their rivals. Without having yielded up their peculiar tastes or their incorrigible viciousness, they have however, heightened their individual excellencies. No human opinion can change their self opinion ; alive to the consciousness of their powers, their pursuits are placed above impediment, and their great views can suffer no contraction. These men of genius bear a charmed mail on their breast ; “ hopeless, not heartless,” may be often the motto of their ensign ; and if they do not always possess reputation, they still look for fame ; for these do not necessarily accompany each other.

Acknowledge, too, that an author must be more sensible to his real merits, while he is unquestionably much less to his defects, than most of his readers ; the author not only comprehends his merits better, because they have passed through a long process in his mind, but he is familiar with every part, while the reader has had but a vague notion of the whole. Why does the excellent work, by repetition, rise in interest ? because in obtaining this gradual intimacy with

an author, we appear to recover half the genius we had lost on a first perusal. The work of genius too is associated, in the mind of the author, with much more than it contains. Why are great men often found greater than the books they write? Ask the man of genius, if he has written all he wished he could have written? Has he satisfied himself, in this work for which you accuse his pride? The true supplement has not always accompanied the work itself. The mind of the reader has the limits of a mere recipient, while that of the author, even after his work, is teeming with creation. "On many occasions, my soul seems to know more than it can say, and to be endowed with a mind by itself, far superior to the mind I really have," said Marivaux, with equal truth and happiness.

With these explanations of what are called the vanity and egotism of genius, be it remembered, that the sense of their own sufficiency is assumed at their own risk; the great man who thinks greatly of himself, is not diminishing that greatness, in heaping fuel on his fire. With his unlucky brethren, such a feeling may end in the aberrations of harmless madness; as it happened with Percival Stockdale. He, who after a parallel between himself and Charles XII.

of Sweden, concludes that "some parts will be to *his* advantage, and some to *mine*," but in regard to fame,—the main object between Stockdale and Charles XII.—Percival imagined that "his own will not probably take its fixed and immoveable station, and shine with its expanded and permanent splendour till it consecrates his ashes, till it illumines his tomb." After this, the reader, who may never have heard of the name of Percival Stockdale, must be told, that there exist his own "Memoirs of his Life and Writings."* The memoirs of a scribbler are instructive to literary men; to correct, and to be corrected, should be their daily practice, that they may be taught not only to exult in themselves, but to fear themselves.

It is hard to refuse these men of genius that *aura vitalis*, of which they are so apt to be liberal to others. Are they not accused of the meanest adulations? When a young writer finds the notice of a person of some eminence, he has expressed himself in language which transcended that of mortality; a finer reason than reason itself, inspired it; the sensation has been expressed with all its fulness, by Milton,

* I have sketched a character of Percival Stockdale, in *Calamities of Authors*, ii. 313, it was taken *ad vivum*.

“The debt immense of endless gratitude.”

Who ever pays an “immense debt,” in small sums? Every man of genius has left such honourable traces of his private affections,—from Locke, whose dedication of his great work is more adulative than could be imagined, from a temperate philosopher, to Churchill, whose warm eulogiums on his friends so beautifully contrast with the dark and evil passions of his satire. Even in advanced age, the man of genius dwells on the nutritious praise he caught in his youth from veteran genius; that seed sinks deep into a genial soil, roots there, and, like the aloe, will flower at the end of life. When Virgil was yet a youth, Cicero heard one of his eclogues, and exclaimed with his accustomed warmth,

Magna spes altera Romæ!

“The second great hope of Rome” intending by the first, either himself or Lucretius. The words of Cicero were the secret honey on which the imagination of Virgil fed for many a year; for in one of his latest productions, the twelfth book of the *Æneid*, he applies these very words

to Ascanius; the voice of Cicero had hung for ever in his ear.

Such then, is the extreme susceptibility of praise in men of genius, and not less their exuberant sensibility to censure; I have elsewhere shown how some have died of criticism. The Abbé Cassagne felt so acutely the severity of Boileau, that in the prime of life he fell melancholy, and died insane. I am informed that the poet, Scott of Amwell, could never recover from a ludicrous criticism, written by a physician, who never pretended to poetical taste. Some, like Racine, have died of a simple rebuke, and some have found an epigram, as one who fell a victim to one, said, "fasten on their hearts, and have been thrown into a slow fever." Pope has been seen writhing in anguish on his chair; and it is told of Montesquieu, that notwithstanding the greatness of his character, he was so much affected by the perpetual criticisms on his work on Laws, that they hastened his death. The morbid feelings of Hawkesworth closed in suicide. The self-love of genius is, perhaps, much more delicate than gross.

But alas, their vengeance as quickly kindled, lasts as long! Genius is a dangerous gift of na-

ture ; with a keener relish for enjoyment, and with passions more effervescent, the same material forms a Catiline and a Cromwell, or a Cicero and a Bacon. Plato, in his visionary man of genius, lays great stress on his possessing the most vehement passions, while he adds reason to restrain them. But it is imagination which torments even their inflammable senses ; give to the same vehement passion a different direction, and it is glory, or infamy.

Si je n'étois Cæsar, j'aurois été Brutus."

Voltaire.

The imagination of genius is the breath of its life, which breeds its own disease. How are we to describe symptoms which come from one source, but show themselves in all forms ? It is now an intermittent fever, now a silent delirium, an hysterical affection, and now a horrid hypochondriasm. Have we no other opiate to still the agony, no other cordial to send its warmth to the heart, than Plato's reason ? Must men of genius, who so rarely pass through this slow curative method, remain with all their tortured and torturing passions about them, often self-disgusted, self-humiliated ? The enmities of genius are often connected with their morbid imagination ; these origin-

ate in casual slights, or in unguarded expressions, or in hasty opinions, or in a witty derision, or even in the obtruding goodness of tender admonition—The man of genius broods over the phantom that darkens his feelings, and sharpens his vindictive fangs, in a libel, called his memoirs, or in another public way, called a criticism. We are told, that Comines the historian, when residing at the court of the Count de Charolois afterwards Duke of Burgundy, one day returning from hunting, with inconsiderate jocularly sat down before the Count, ordering the Prince to pull off his boots; the Count would not affect greatness, and having executed his commission, in return for the princely amusement, the Count dashed the boot on Comines's nose, which bled; and from that time, he was mortified at the Count of Burgundy, by retaining the nick-name of *the booted head*. The blow rankled in the heart of the man of genius, and the Duke of Burgundy has come down to us in his memoirs, blackened by his vengeance. Many, unknown to their readers, like Comines, have had a booted head, but the secret poison is distilled on their lasting page. I have elsewhere fully written a tale of literary hatred, where is seen a man of genius, devoting a whole life in harassing the industry or the genius which he himself could not attain, in the character of Gil-

bert Stuart.* The French Revolution, among its illustrations of the worst human passions exhibits one, in Collot d'Herbois ; when this wretch was tossed up in the storm, to the summit of power, a monstrous imagination seized him ; he projected rasing the city of Lyons and massacring its inhabitants. He had even the heart to commence, and to continue this conspiracy against human nature ; the ostensible motive was royalism, but the secret one was literary vengeance ! as wretched a poet and actor as a man, he had been hissed off the theatre in Lyons, and his dark remorseless genius resolved to repay that ignominy, by the blood of its citizens and the very walls of the city. Is there but one Collot d'Herbois in the universe ? When the imagination of genius becomes its madness, even the worst of human beings is only a genius.

* See Calamities of Authors, ii. 49.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF GENIUS.

WHEN the temper and the leisure of the literary character are alike broken, even his best works, the too faithful mirrors of his state of mind, will participate of its inequalities; and surely the incubations of genius in its delicate and shadowy combinations, are not less sensible in their operation than the composition of sonorous bodies, where, while the warm metal is settling in the mould, even an unusual vibration of the air, during the moment of fusion, will injure the tone.

Some of the conspicuous blemishes of several great compositions may be attributed to the domestic infelicities of their authors. The desultory life of Camoens is imagined to be perceptible in the deficient connection of his epic; and Milton's peculiar situation and divided family prevent-

ed those passages from being erased, which otherwise had not escaped from his revising hand—he felt himself in the situation of his Sampson Agonistes, whom he so pathetically describes, as

“ His foes derision, captive, poor and blind.”

Cervantes, through precipitate publication, fell into those slips of memory observable in his satirical romance. The careless rapid lines of Dryden are justly attributed to his distress, and he indeed pleads for his inequalities from his domestic circumstances. Johnson silently, but eagerly, often corrected the *Ramblers* in their successive editions, of which so many had been despatched in haste. The learned Greaves offered some excuses for his errors in his edition of *Abulfeda*, from “ his being five years encumbered with lawsuits and diverted from his studies.” When at length he returned to them, he expresses his surprise “ at the pains he had formerly undergone,” but of which he now felt himself “ unwilling, he knew not how, of again undergoing.” Goldoni, when at the bar, abandoned his comic talent for several years; and having resumed it, his first comedy totally failed: “ My head,” says he, “ was occupied with my professional em-

ployment, I was uneasy in mind and in bad humour."

The best years of Mengs's life were embittered by the misery and the harshness of his father, who himself a poor artist, and with poorer feelings, converted his home into a prison-house, forced his son into the slavery of stipulated task-work, while his bread and water were the only fruits of the fine arts; in this domestic persecution, from which he was at length obliged to fly, he contracted those morose and saturnine habits, which for ever after shut up the ungenial Mengs in the dark solitude of his soul. It has been said of Alonso Cano, a celebrated Spanish painter, that he would have carried his art much higher had not the unceasing persecution of the inquisitors entirely deprived him of that tranquillity so necessary to the very existence of art. The poet Rousseau passed half his life in trouble, in anger, and in despair, from the severe persecution, or the justice, of his enemies, respecting an anonymous libel attributed to him; his temper was poisoned, and he poisoned. Ovid, in exile on the barren shores of Tomos, deserted by his genius, even in his copious *Tristia*, loses the luxuriance of his fancy. The reason which Rousseau alleges for the cynical spleen which so frequently breathes

forth in his works, shows how the domestic character of the man of genius leaves itself behind in his productions. After describing the infelicity of his domestic affairs occasioned by the mother of Theresa, and Theresa herself, both women of the lowest order, he adds on this wretched marriage, "these unexpected disagreeable events, in a state of my own choice, plunged me into literature, to give a new direction and diversion to my mind; and in all my first works, I scattered that bilious humour which had occasioned this very occupation." Our author's character in his works was the very opposite one in which he appeared to these low people; they treated his simplicity as utter silliness; feeling his degradation among them, his personal timidity assumed a tone of boldness and originality in his writings, while a strong sense of shame heightened his causticity, contemning that urbanity he knew not to practise. His miserable subservience to these people was the real cause of his oppressed spirit calling out for some undefined freedom in society. Thus the real Rousseau, with all his disordered feelings, only appeared in his writings; the secrets of his heart were in his pen.

The home of the literary character should be the abode of repose and of silence. There must

he look for the feasts of study, in progressive and alternate labours; a taste “which,” says Gibbon, “I would not exchange for the treasures of India.” Rousseau had always a work going on, for rainy days and spare hours, such as his dictionary of music; a variety of works never tired; the single one only exhausted. Metastasio talks with delight of his variety, which resembled the fruits in the garden of Armida,

E mentre spunta l'un, l'altro mature.

While one matures, the other buds and blows.

Nor is it always fame, nor any lower motive, which may induce him to hold an indefatigable pen; another equally powerful exists, which must remain inexplicable to him who knows not to escape from the listlessness of life—the passion for literary occupation. He whose eye can only measure the space occupied by the voluminous labours of the elder Pliny, of a Mazzuchelli, a Muratori, a Montfaucon, and a Gough, all men who laboured from the love of labour, and can see nothing in that space but the industry which filled it, is like him who only views a city at a distance—the streets and the squares, and all the life and population within, he can never know. These literary characters projected these works as so many schemes to escape from uninteresting pursuits; and, in these folios, how many evils of life

did they bury, while their happiness expanded with their volume. Aulus Gellius desired to live no longer, than he was able to retain the faculty of writing and observing. The literary character must grow as impassioned with his subject as Ælian with his History of Animals; "wealth and honour I might have obtained at the courts of princes; but I preferred the delight of multiplying my knowledge. I am aware that the avaricious and the ambitious will accuse me of folly, but I have always found most pleasure in observing the nature of animals, studying their character, and writing their history." Even with those who have acquired their celebrity, the love of literary labour is not diminished, a circumstance recorded by the younger Pliny of Livy; in a preface to one of his lost books, that historian had said that he had got sufficient glory by his former writings on the Roman history, and might now repose in silence; but his mind was so restless and so abhorrent of indolence, that it only felt its existence in literary exertion. Such are the minds who are without hope, if they are without occupation.

Amidst the repose and silence of study, delightful to the literary character, are the soothing interruptions of the voices of those whom he loves; these shall re-animate his languor, and

moments of inspiration shall be caught in the emotions of affection, when a father or a friend, a wife, a daughter, or a sister, become the participators of his own tastes, the companions of his studies, and identify their happiness with his fame. If Horace was dear to his friends, he declares they owed him to his father,

————— purus et insons
 (Ut me collaudem) si vivo et carus amicis,
 Causa fuit Pater his.

Lib. i. Sat. vi. v. 69.

If pure and innocent, if dear (forgive
 These little praises) to my friends I live,
 My father was the cause.

Francis.

This intelligent father, an obscure tax-gatherer, discovered the propensity of Horace's mind; for he removed the boy of genius from a rural seclusion to the metropolis, anxiously attending on him to his various masters. Vitruvius pours forth a grateful prayer to the memory of his parents, who had instilled into his soul a love for literary and philosophical subjects. The father of Gibbon urged him to literary distinction, and the dedication of the "Essay on literature," to that father, connected with his subsequent labour, shows the force of the excitement. The son of Buffon one day surprised his father by the sight

of a column, which he had raised to the memory of his father's eloquent genius. "It will do you honour," observed the Gallic sage. And when that son in the revolution was led to the guillotine, he ascended in silence, so impressed with his father's fame, that he only told the people, "I am the son of Buffon!" It was the mother of Burns who kindled his genius by delighting his childhood with the recitations of the old Scottish ballads, while to his father he attributed his cast of character; as Bishop Watson has recently traced to the affectionate influence of his mother, the religious feelings which he declares he had inherited from her. There is, what may be called, family genius; in the home of a man of genius he diffuses an electrical atmosphere; his own pre-eminence strikes out talents in all. Evelyn, in his beautiful retreat at Sayes Court, had inspired his family with that variety of tastes which he himself was spreading throughout the nation. His son translated Rapin's "Gardens," which poem the father proudly preserved in his "Sylva;" his lady, ever busied in his study, excelled in the arts her husband loved, and designed the frontispiece to his Lucretius; she was the cultivator of their celebrated garden, which served as "an example," of his great work on "forest trees." Cowley, who has commemorated Evelyn's love of books and gardens, has delightfully applied them

to his lady, in whom, says the bard, Evelyn meets both pleasures ;

“ The fairest garden in her looks,
And in her mind the wisest books.”

The house of Haller resembled a temple consecrated to science and the arts, for the votaries were his own family. The universal acquirements of Haller, were possessed in some degree by every one under his roof ; and their studious delight in transcribing manuscripts, in consulting authors, in botanising, drawing and colouring the plants under his eye, formed occupations which made the daughters happy and the sons eminent. The painter Stella inspired his family to copy his fanciful inventions, and the playful graver of Claudine Stella, his niece, animated his “ Sports of Children.” The poems of the late Hurdis were printed by the hands of his sisters.

No event in literary history is more impressive than the fate of Quintillian ; it was in the midst of his elaborate work, composed to form the literary character of a son, his great hope, that he experienced the most terrible affliction in the domestic life of genius—the deaths of his wife, and one child after the other. It was a moral earthquake with a single survivor amidst the ruins. An awful burst of parental and literary

affliction breaks forth in Quintillian's lamentation,—"my wealth, and my writings, the fruits of a long and painful life, must now be reserved only for strangers; all I possess is for aliens and no longer mine!" The husband, the father, and the man of genius, utter one cry of agony.

Deprived of these social consolations, we see Johnson call about him those whose calamities exiled them from society, and his roof lodges the blind, the lame and the poor; for the heart of genius must possess something human it can call its own to be kind to. Its elevated emotions, even in domestic life, would enlarge the moral vocabulary, like the Abbè de Saint Pierre, who has fixed in his language two significant words; one which served to explain the virtue most familiar to him—*bienfaisance*; and the irritable vanity magnifying its ephemeral fame the sage reduced to a mortifying diminutive—*la gloriolle*.

It has often excited surprise that men of genius eminent in the world, are not more revered than other men in their domestic circle. The disparity between the public and the private esteem of the same man is often striking; in privacy the comic genius is not always cheerful, the sage is sometimes ridiculous, and the poet not delightful. The golden hour of invention

must terminate like other hours, and when the man of genius returns to the cares, the duties, the vexations, and the amusements of life, his companions behold him as one of themselves—the creature of habits and infirmities. Men of genius, like the deities of Homer, are deities only in their “Heaven of Invention:” mixing with mortals, they shed their blood like Venus, or bellow like Mars. Yet in the business of life the cultivators of science and the arts, with all their simplicity of feeling and generous openness about them, do not meet on equal terms with other men; their frequent abstractions calling off the mind to whatever enters into its favourite pursuits, render them greatly inferior to others in practical and immediate observation. A man of genius may know the whole map of the world of human nature; but, like the great geographer, may be apt to be lost in the wood, which any one in the neighbourhood knows better than him. “The conversation of a poet,” says Goldsmith, “is that of a man of sense, while his actions are those of a fool.” Genius, careless of the future, and absent in the present, avoids to mix too deeply in common life as its business; hence it becomes an easy victim to common fools and vulgar villains. “I love my family’s welfare, but I cannot be so foolish as to make myself the slave to the minute affairs of a house,” said Montes-

quieu. The story told of a man of learning is probably true, however ridiculous; deeply occupied in his library, one, rushing in, informed him that the house was on fire! "Go to my wife—these matters belong to her!" pettishly replied the interrupted student. Bacon sat at one end of his table wrapt in many a reverie, while at the other the creatures about him were trafficking with his honour, and ruining his good name; "I am better fitted for this," said that great man once, holding out a book, "than for the life I have of late led." Buffon, who consumed his mornings in his old tower of Montbar, at the end of his garden, with all nature opening to him, formed all his ideas of what was passing before him by the arts of an active and pliant capuchin, and the comments of a perruquier on the scandalous chronicles: these he treated as children; but the children commanded the great man. Dr. Young, whose satires give the very anatomy of human foibles, was entirely governed by his housekeeper; she thought and acted for him, which probably greatly assisted the "Night Thoughts," but his curate exposed the domestic economy of a man of genius by a satirical novel. Was not the hero Marlborough, at the moment he was the terror of France and the glory of Germany, held under the finger of his wife by the meanest passion of avarice?

But men of genius have too often been accused of imaginary crimes; their very eminence attracts the lie of calumny, a lie which tradition conveys beyond the possibility of refutation. Sometimes reproached for being undutiful sons, because they displeased their fathers in making an obscure name celebrated. The family of Descartes were insensible to the lustre his studies reflected on them; they lamented, as a blot in their escutcheon, that Descartes, who was born a gentleman, should become a philosopher. This elevated genius was even denied the satisfaction of embracing an unforgiving parent, while his dwarfish brother, with a mind diminutive as his person, ridiculed his philosophic relative, and turned to advantage his philosophic dispositions. They have been deemed disagreeable companions, because they felt the weariness of dullness, or the impertinence of intrusion; as bad husbands, when united to women, who without a kindred feeling had the mean sense, or the unnatural cruelty, to prey upon their infirmities. But is the magnet less a magnet, though the particles scattered about it, incapable of attraction, are unagitated by its occult quality?

Poverty is the endemial distemper of the commonwealth; but poverty is no term for "ears polite." Few can conceive a great cha-

racter in a state of humble existence! The passion for wealth through all ranks, leaving the Hollanders aside, seems peculiar to the country where the "Wealth of Nations" is made the principle of its existence; and where the *bono*? is ever referred to a commercial result. This is not the chief object of life among the continental nations, where it seems properly restricted to the commercial class. Montesquieu, who was in England, observed that "if he had been born here nothing could have consoled him on failing to accumulate a large fortune, but I do not lament the mediocrity of my circumstances in France." This evil, for such it may be considered, has much increased here since Montesquieu's visit. It is useless to persuade some that there is a poverty, neither vulgar nor terrifying, asking no favours, and on no terms receiving any—a poverty which annihilates its ideal evils, and becomes even a source of pride—a state which will confer independence, that first step to genius!

There have been men of genius who have even learnt to want. We see Rousseau rushing out of the hotel of the financier, selling his watch, copying music by the sheet, and by the mechanical industry of two hours, purchasing ten for genius. We may smile at the enthusiasm of young

Barry, who finding himself too constant a haunter of tavern-company, imagined that this expenditure of time was occasioned by having money; to put an end to the conflict, he threw the little he possessed at once into the Liffey; but let us not forget that Barry, in the maturity of life, confidently began a labour of years, and one of the noblest inventions in his art, a great poem in a picture, with no other resource than what he found in secret labours through the night, by which he furnished the shops with those slight and saleable sketches which secured uninterrupted mornings for his genius. Spinosa, a name as celebrated and calumniated as Epicurus, lived in all sorts of abstinence, even of honours, of pensions, and of presents, which, however disguised by kindness, he would not accept, so fearful was this philosopher of a chain; lodging in a cottage, and, obtaining a livelihood by polishing optical glasses, at his death his small accounts showed how he had subsisted on a few pence a day.

“Enjoy spare feast! a radish and an egg.”—*Cowper*.

Spinosa said he never had spent more than he earned, and certainly thought there was such a thing as superfluous earnings. Such are the men who have often smiled at the light regard of their neighbours in contrast with their growing

celebrity; and who feel that eternal truth, which the wisest and the poorest of the Athenians has sent down to us, that "not to want any thing is an attribute of the Divinity; but man approximates to this perfection by wanting little."

There may be sufficient motives to induce the literary character to make a state of mediocrity his choice. If he loses his happiness, he mutilates his genius. Goldoni, with the simplicity of his feelings and habits, in reviewing his life, tells us how he was always relapsing into his old propensity of comic writing; "but the thought of this does not disturb me; for though in any other situation I might have been in easier circumstances, I should never have been so happy." Bayle is a parent of the modern literary character; he pursued the same course, and early in life adopted the principle "Neither to fear bad fortune, nor have any ardent desires for good." He was acquainted with the passions only as their historian, and living only for literature, he sacrificed to it the two great acquisitions of human pursuits—fortune and a family; but in England, in France, in Germany, in Italy, in Holland, in Flanders, at Geneva, he found a family of friends, and an accumulation of celebrity. A life of hard deprivations was long the life of Linnæus.

Without a fortune, it never seemed to him necessary to acquire one. Peregrinating on foot with a stylus, a magnifying glass, and a basket for plants, he shared with the peasant his rustic meal. Never was glory acquired at a cheaper rate, says one of his eulogists. Satisfied with the least of the little, he only felt the necessity of completing his Floras; and the want of fortune did not deprive him of his glory, nor of that statue raised to him after death in the gardens of the University of Upsal; nor of that solemn eulogy delivered by a crowned head; nor of those medals which the king of Sweden, and the Swedes, struck, to commemorate the genius of the three kingdoms of Nature.

In substituting fortune for the object of his designs, the man of genius deprives himself of the inspirations of him who lives for himself; that is, for his Art. If he bends to the public taste, not daring to raise it to his own, he has not the choice of his subjects, which itself is a sort of invention. A task-worker ceases to think his own thoughts; the stipulated price and time are weighing on his pen or his pencil, while the hour-glass is dropping its hasty sands. If the man of genius would become something more than himself—if he would be wealthy and even luxurious, another fever torments him, besides

the thirst of glory; such ardent desires create many fears, and a mind in fear is a mind in slavery. So inadequate, too, are the remunerations of literary works, that the one of the greatest skill and difficulty, and the longest labour, is not valued with that hasty spurious novelty for which the taste of the public is craving, from the strength of its disease rather than its appetite. Rousseau observed that his musical opera, the work of five or six weeks, brought him as much money as he had received for his *Emilius*, which had cost him twenty years of meditation, and three years of composition. This single fact represents a hundred. In one of Shakespeare's sonnets he pathetically laments this compulsion of his necessities which forced him on the trade of pleasing the public; and he illustrates this degradation by a novel image. "Chide Fortune," cries the bard,—

"The guilty goddess of my harmless deeds,
 That did not better for my life provide
 Than public means which public manners breeds;
 Thence comes it that my name receives a brand;
 And almost thence my nature is subdued
 To what it works in, LIKE THE DYER'S HAND."

Such is the fate of that author, who, in his variety of task-works, blue, yellow, and red, lives without ever having shown his own natural complexion. We hear the eloquent truth

from another who has shared in the bliss of composition, and the misery of its "daily bread." "A single hour of composition won from the business of the day, is worth more than the whole day's toil of him who works at the *trade of literature*: in the one case the spirit comes joyfully to refresh itself, like a hart to the water-brooks; in the other it pursues its miserable way, panting and jaded with the dogs of hunger and necessity behind."*

Genius undegraded and unexhausted, may, indeed, even in a garret, glow in its career; but it must be on the principle which induced Rousseau solemnly to renounce writing "*par metier*." This in the *Journal des Scavans* he once attempted, but found himself quite inadequate to "the profession,"† In a garret, the author of the "*Studies of Nature*" exultingly tells us that he arranged his work. "It was in a little garret, in the new street of St. Etienne du Mont, where I resided four years, in the midst of physical and domestic afflictions. But there I enjoyed the most exquisite pleasures of my life, amid profound solitude and an enchanting horizon. There I put the finishing hand

* Quarterly Review, No. XVI. p. 538

† Twice he repeated this resolution.—See his works, vol. xxxi. p. 283; vol. xxxii. p. 90.

to my "Studies of Nature," and there I published them."

It has been a question with some, more indeed abroad than at home, whether the art of instructing mankind by the press would not be less suspicious in its character, were it less interested in one of its motives? We have had some noble self-denials of this kind, and are not without them even in our country. Boileau almost censures Racine for having accepted money for one of his dramas, while he who was not rich, gave away his elaborate works to the public; and he seems desirous of raising the art of writing to a more disinterested profession than any other, requiring no fees. Milton did not compose his immortal labour with any view of copyright; and Linnæus sold his works for a single ducat. The Abbé Mably, the author of many political and moral works, preserved the dignity of the literary character, for while he lived on little, he would accept only a few presentation copies from the booksellers. Since we have become a nation of book collectors, the principle seems changed; even the wealthy author becomes proud of the largest tribute paid to his genius, because this tribute is the evidence of the numbers who pay it; so that the property of a book represents to the literary candidate so many thousand voters in his favour.

The man of genius wrestling with heavy and oppressive fortune, who follows the avocations of an author as a precarious source of existence, should take as the model of the authorial life that of Dr. Johnson; the dignity of the literary character was ever associated with his feelings; and the "reverence thyself" was present to his mind even when doomed to be one of the *Helotæ* of literature, by Osborn, by Cave, or by Millar. Destitute of this ennobling principle, the author sinks into the tribe of those rabid adventurers of the pen who have masked the degraded form of the literary character under the title of "authors by profession"—the Guthries, the Ralphs, and the Amhursts.* "There are worse evils, for the literary man," says a modern author, who is himself the true model of the great literary character,—“than neglect, poverty, imprisonment, and death. There are even more pitiable objects than Chatterton himself with the poison at his lips.” “I should die with hunger, were I at peace with the world,” exclaimed a corsair of literature,—and dashed his pen into that black flood before him of soot and gall.

* The reader will find an original letter by Guthrie to a Minister of State, in which this modern phrase was probably his own invention, with the principle unblushingly avowed. See "Calamities of authors," vol. i. p. 5. Ralph farther opens mysteries, in an anonymous pamphlet of "The Case of Authors by Profession." They were both pensioned.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MATRIMONIAL STATE.

MATRIMONY has often been considered as a condition not well suited to the domestic life of genius; it is accompanied by too many embarrassments for the head and the heart. It was an axiom with Fuessli, the Swiss artist, that the marriage state is incompatible with a high cultivation of the fine arts. Peiresc, the great French collector, refused marriage, convinced that the cares of a family were too absorbing for the freedom necessary to literary pursuits, and a sacrifice of fortune incompatible with his great designs. Boyle, who would not suffer his studies to be interrupted by "household affairs," lived as a boarder with his sister, Lady Ranelagh. Bayle, and Hobbes, and Hume; and Gibbon, and Adam Smith, decided for celibacy. Such has been the state of the great author whose sole occupation is combined with passion, and whose happiness is his fame—fame, which balances that of the heroes of the age, who have sometimes honoured themselves by acknowledging it.

'This debate, for our present topic has sometimes warmed into one, in truth is ill adapted for controversy; the heart is more concerned in its issue than any espoused doctrine terminating in partial views. Look into the domestic annals of genius—observe the variety of positions into which the literary character is thrown in the nuptial state. Will cynicism always obtain his sullen triumph, and prudence be allowed to calculate away some of the richer feelings of our nature? Is it an axiom that literary characters must necessarily institute a new order of celibacy? One position we may assume, that the studies, and even the happiness of the pursuits of literary characters, are powerfully influenced by the domestic associate of their lives.

Men of genius rarely pass through the age of love without its passion: even their Delias and Amandas are often the shadows of some real object. According to Shakespeare's experience,

“Never durst poet touch a pen to write,
Until his ink were tempered with love's sighs.”

Love's Labour Lost, Act IV. Scene 3.

Their imagination is perpetually colouring those pictures of domestic happiness they delight to dwell on. He who is no husband may sigh for that devoted tenderness which is at once bestowed and received; and tears may start in

the eyes of him who can become a child among children, and is no father. These deprivations have usually been the concealed cause of the querulous and settled melancholy of the literary character. The real occasion of Shenstone's unhappiness was, that early in life he had been captivated by a young lady adapted to be both the muse and the wife of the poet. Her mild graces were soon touched by his plaintive love-songs and elegies. Their sensibility was too mutual, and lasted for some years, till she died. It was in parting from her that he first sketched his "Pastoral Ballad." Shenstone had the fortitude to refuse marriage; his spirit could not endure that she should participate in that life of deprivations to which he was doomed, by an inconsiderate union with poetry and poverty. But he loved, and his heart was not locked up in the ice of celibacy. He says in a moment of humour, "It is long since I have considered myself as *undone*. The world will not perhaps consider me in that light entirely till I have married my maid." Thomson met a reciprocal passion in his Amanda, while the full tenderness of his heart was ever wasting itself, like waters in a desert. As we have been made little acquainted with this part of the history of the poet of the Seasons, I give his own description of these deep feelings from a manuscript letter written to Mallet. "To

turn my eyes a softer way, to you know who—absence sighs it to me.—What is my heart made of? a soft system of low nerves, too sensible for my quiet—capable of being very happy or very unhappy, I am afraid the last will prevail. Lay your hand upon a kindred heart, and despise me not. I know not what it is, but she dwells upon my thought in a mingled sentiment, which is the sweetest, the most intimately pleasing the soul can receive, and which I would wish never to want towards some dear object or another. To have always some secret darling idea to which one can still have recourse amidst the noise and nonsense of the world, and which never fails to touch us in the most exquisite manner, is an art of happiness that fortune cannot deprive us of. This may be called romantic; but whatever the cause is, the effect is really felt. Pray, when you write, tell me when you saw her, and with the pure eye of a friend, when you see her again, whisper that I am her most humble servant.” Even Pope was enamoured of “a scornful lady;” and, as Johnson observed, “polluted his will with female resentment.” Johnson himself, we are told by Miss Seward, who knew him, “had always a metaphysical passion for one princess or other,—the rustic Lucy Porter, or the haughty Molly Aston, or the sublimated methodistic Hill Boothby; and, lastly, the more charming Mrs.

Thrale." Even in his advanced age, at the height of his celebrity, we hear his cries of lonely wretchedness. "I want every comfort; my life is very solitary and very cheerless. Let me know that I have yet a friend—let us be kind to one another." (But the "kindness" of distant friends is like the polar sun, too far removed to warm. A female is the only friend the solitary can have, because her friendship is never absent. Even those who have eluded individual tenderness, are tortured by an aching void in their feelings. The stoic Akenside, in his books of "Odes," has preserved the history of a life of genius in a series of his own feelings. One entitled, "At Study," closes with these memorable lines :

" Me though no peculiar fair
Touches with a lover's care ;
 Though the pride of my desire
Asks immortal friendship's name,
Asks the palm of honest fame
 And the old heroic lyre ;
Though the day have smoothly gone,
Or to lettered leisure known,
 Or in social duty spent ;
Yet at eve my lonely breast
Seeks in vain for perfect rest,
Languishes for true content."

If ever a man of letters lived in a state of energy and excitement which might raise him above the atmosphere of social love, it was as-

surely the enthusiast, Thomas Hollis, who, solely devoted to literature and to republicanism, was occupied in furnishing Europe and America with editions of his favourite authors. He would not marry, lest marriage should interrupt the labours of his platonic politics. But his extraordinary memoirs, while they show an intrepid mind in a robust frame, bear witness to the self-tormentor who had trodden down the natural bonds of domestic life. Hence the deep "dejection of his spirits;" those incessant cries, that he has "no one to advise, assist, or cherish those magnanimous pursuits in him." At length he retreated into the country, in utter hopelessness. "I go not into the country for attentions to agriculture as such, nor attentions of interest of any kind, which I have ever despised as such; but as a *used man*, to pass the remainder of a life in tolerable sanity and quiet, after having given up the flower of it, voluntarily, day, week, month, year after year, successive to each other, to public service, and being no longer able to sustain, in *body or mind*, the labours that I have chosen to go through without falling speedily into *the greatest disorders*, and it might be *imbecility itself*. This is not colouring, but the exact plain truth," and Gray's,

"Poor moralist, and what art thou?"

A solitary fly!

Thy joys no glittering female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets."

Assuredly it would not be a question whether these literary characters should have married, had not Montaigne, when a widower, declared that "he would not marry a second time, though it were wisdom itself;"—but the airy Gascon has not disclosed how far *Madame* was concerned in this anathema.

If the literary man unites himself to a woman whose tastes, and whose temper, are adverse to his pursuits, he must courageously prepare for a martyrdom. Should a female mathematician be united to a poet, it is probable that she would be left to her abstractions; to demonstrate to herself how many a specious diagram fails when brought into its mechanical operation; or while discovering the infinite varieties of a curve, may deduce her husband's. If she becomes as jealous of his books as other wives are of the mistresses of their husbands, she may act the virago even over his innocent papers. The wife of Bishop Cooper, while her husband was employed on his Lexicon, one day consigned the volume of many years to the flames; and obliged that scholar to begin a second siege of Troy in a second Lexicon. The wife of Whitelocke often

destroyed his MSS. and the marks of her nails have come down to posterity in the numerous *lacerations* still gaping in his "Memorials." The learned Sir Henry Saville, who devoted more than half his life, and near ten thousand pounds, to his magnificent edition of St. Chrysostom, led a very uneasy life between that Saint and Lady Saville; what with her tenderness for him and her own want of amusement, Saint Chrysostom incurred more than one danger. One of those learned scholars who translated the Scriptures, kept a diary of his studies and his domestic calamities, for they both went on together; busied only among his books, his wife, from many causes, plunged him into debt; he was compelled to make the last sacrifice of a literary man, by disposing of his library. But now, he without books, and she worse and worse in temper, discontents were of fast growth between them. Our man of study, found his wife, like the remora, a little fish, sticking at the bottom of his ship impeding its progress. He desperately resolved to fly from his country and his wife. There is a cool entry in the diary, on a warm proceeding, one morning; wherein he expresses some curiosity to know the cause of his wife being out of temper! Simplicity of a patient scholar!* The present matrimonial

* The entry may amuse. Hodie, nescio qua intemperia uxorem meam agitavit, nam pecuniam usudatam projecit humi,

case, however, terminated in unexpected happiness; the wife, after having forced her husband to be deprived of his library, to be daily chronicling her caprices, and finally, to take the serious resolution of abandoning his country, yet, living in good old times, religion and conscience united them again; and, as the connubial diarist ingeniously describes this second marriage of himself and his wife,—“made it be with them, as surgeons say it is with a fractured bone, if once well set, the stronger for a fracture.” A new consolation for domestic ruptures!

Observe the errors and infirmities of the greatest men of genius in their matrimonial connections. Milton carried nothing of the greatness of his mind, in the choice of his wives; his first wife was the object of sudden fancy. He left the metropolis, and unexpectedly returned a married man; united to a woman of such uncongenial dispositions, that the romp was frightened at the literary habits of the great poet, found his house solitary, beat his nephews, and ran away after a single month's residence! to this circumstance, we owe his famous treatise on Divorce, and a *ac sic irata discessit*.—“This day, I know not the cause of the ill-temper of my wife; when I gave her money for daily expences, she flung it upon the ground and departed in passion.” For some, this Flemish picture must be too familiar to please, too minute a copy of vulgar life.

party, (by no means extinct,) who, having made as ill choices in their wives, were for divorcing, as fast as they had been for marrying, calling themselves *Miltonists*. When we find that Molière, so skilful in human life, married a girl from his own troop, who made him experience all those bitter disgusts and ridiculous embarrassments which he himself played off at the Theatre; that Addison's fine taste in morals and in life, could suffer the ambition of a courtier to prevail with himself to seek a Countess, whom he describes under the stormy character of Oceana, who drove him contemptuously into solitude, and shortened his days; and, that Steele, warm and thoughtless, was united to a cold precise "Miss Prue," as he calls her, and from whom he never parted without bickerings; in all these cases, we censure the great men, not their wives.* ROUSSEAU has honestly confessed his error: he had united himself to a low illiterate woman—and when he retreated into solitude, he felt the weight which he carried with him. He laments that he had not educated his wife; "In a docile age, I could have adorned her mind with talents and knowledge which would have more closely united us in retirement. We should not then have felt the intolerable tedium of a tête à tête; it is in

* See *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. ii. for various anecdotes of "Literary Wives." Sixth Edition, 1817.

solitude one feels the advantage of living with another who can think." Thus Rousseau confesses the fatal error, and indicates the right principle.

But it seems not absolutely necessary for the domestic happiness of the literary character, that his wife should be a literary woman. The lady of Wieland was a very pleasing domestic person, who without reading her husband's works, knew he was a great poet. Wieland was apt to exercise his imagination in a sort of angry declamation and bitter amplifications; and the writer of this account, in perfect German taste, assures us, "that many of his felicities of diction were thus struck out at a heat:" during this frequent operation of his genius, the placable temper of Mrs. Wieland overcame the orgasm of the German bard, merely by her admiration and her patience. When the burst was over, Wieland himself was so charmed by her docility, that he usually closed with giving up all his opinions. There is another sort of homely happiness, aptly described in the plain words of Bishop Newton: He found "the study of sacred and classic authors ill agreed with butchers' and bakers' bills;" and when the prospect of a bishopric opened on him, "more servants, more entertainments, a better table, &c." it became necessary to look

out for "some clever sensible woman to be his wife, who would lay out his money to the best advantage, and be careful and tender of his health; a friend and companion at all hours, and who would be happier in staying at home than be perpetually gadding abroad." Such are the wives, not adapted to be the votaries, but who may be the faithful companions through life, even of a man of genius.

That susceptibility, which is love in its most compliant forms, is a constitutional faculty in the female character, and hence its docility and enthusiasm has varied with the genius of different ages. When universities were opened to the sex, have they not acquired academic glory? Have not the wives of military men shared in the perils of the field, and as Anna Comnena, and our Mrs. Hutchinson, become even their historians? In the age of love and sympathy the female receives an indelible character from her literary associate; his pursuits are even the objects of her thoughts; he sees his tastes reflected in his family, much less by himself, whose solitary labours often preclude him from forming them, than by that image of his own genius in his house—the mother of his children. Antiquity abounds with many inspiring examples of this cameleon reflection of the female character.

Aspasia, from the arms of Pericles, borrowing his genius, could instruct the archons how to govern the republic; Portia, the wife of the republican Brutus, devouring the burning coals, showed a glorious suicide which Brutus had approved; while Paulina, the wife of Seneca, when the veins of that philosopher were commanded to be opened, voluntarily chose the same death; the philosopher commanded that her flowing blood should be stopped, but her pallid features ever after showed her still the wife of Seneca! The wife of Lucan is said to have transcribed and corrected the *Pharsalia* after the death of her husband; the tender mind of the wife had caught the energy of the bard by its intercourse; and when he was no more, she placed his bust on her bed, that she might never close her eyes without being soothed by his image. The picture of a literary wife of antiquity has descended to us, touched by the domestic pencil of a man of genius. It is the susceptible Calphurnia, the lady of the younger Pliny; "her affection to me has given her a turn to books—her passion will increase with our days, for it is not my youth or my person, which time gradually impairs, but my reputation and my glory, of which she is enamoured." Could Mrs. Hutchinson have written the life of her husband, had she not reflected from the patriot himself, all his devotedness to

the country, had she not lent her whole soul to every event which concerned him? This female susceptibility was strong in the wife of Klopstock; our novelist Richardson, who could not read the Messiah in the original, was desirous of some account of the poem, and its progress. She writes to him that no one can inform him better than herself, for she knows the most of that which is not published, "being always present at the birth of the young verses, which begin by fragments here and there, of a subject of which his soul is just then filled. Persons who live as we do have no need of two chambers; we are always in the same; I with my little work, still, still,—only regarding sometimes my husband's sweet face, which is so venerable at that time, with tears of devotion and all the sublimity of the subject—my husband reading me his young verses and suffering my criticisms." Meta Mollers writes with enthusiasm, and in German English; but he is a pitiful critic who has only discovered the oddness of her language.

GESNER declared that whatever were his talents, the person who had most contributed to develope them was his wife. She is unknown to the public; but the history of the mind of such a woman can only be truly discovered in the "Letters of Gesner and his Family." While Gesner gave himself up entirely to his favour-

ite arts, drawing, painting, etching, and composing poems, his wife would often reanimate a genius that was apt to despond in its attempts, and often exciting him to new productions, her certain and delicate taste was attentively consulted by the poet-painter—but she combined the most practical good sense with the most feeling imagination; this forms the rareness of the character—for this same woman, who united with her husband in the education of their children, to relieve him from the interruptions of common business, carried on alone the concerns of his house in *la librairie*. Her correspondence with her son, a young artist travelling for his studies, opens what an old poet comprehensively terms “a gathered mind.” Imagine a woman attending the domestic economy, and the commercial details, yet withdrawing out of this business of life into that of the more elevated pursuits of her husband, and the cares and counsels she bestowed on her son to form the artist and the man. To know this incomparable woman we must hear her. “Consider your father’s precepts as oracles of wisdom; they are the result of the experience he has collected, not only of life, but of that art which he has acquired simply by his own industry.” She would not have her son suffer his strong affection to herself to absorb all other sentiments. “Had you remained at home, and been habituated under your

mother's auspices to employments merely domestic, what advantage would you have acquired? I own we should have passed some delightful winter evenings together; but your love for the arts, and my ambition to see my sons as much distinguished for their talents as their virtues, would have been a constant source of regret at your passing your time in a manner so little worthy of you." How profound is her observation on the strong but confined attachments of a youth of genius. "I have frequently remarked, with some regret, the excessive attachment you indulge towards those who see and feel as you do yourself, and the total neglect with which you seem to treat every one else. I should reproach a man with such a fault who was destined to pass his life in a small and unvarying circle; but in an artist, who has a great object in view, and whose country is the whole world, this disposition seems to me likely to produce a great number of inconveniences—alas! my son, the life you have hitherto led in your father's house has been in fact a pastoral life, and not such a one as was necessary for the education of a man whose destiny summons him to the world."—And when her son, after meditating on some of the most glorious productions of art, felt himself, as he says, "disheartened and cast down at the unattainable superiority of the artist, and that it was only by

reflecting on the immense labour and continued efforts which such master pieces must have required, that I regained my courage and my ardour," she observes, "this passage, my dear son, is to me as precious as gold, and I send it to you again, because I wish you to impress it strongly on your mind. The remembrance of this may also be a useful preservative from too great confidence in your abilities, to which a warm imagination may sometimes be liable, or from the despondence you might occasionally feel from the contemplation of grand originals. Continue, therefore, my dear son, to form a sound judgment and a pure taste from your own observations; your mind, while yet young and flexible, may receive whatever impressions you wish. Be careful that your abilities do not inspire in you too much confidence, lest it should happen to you as it has to many others, that they have never possessed any greater merit than that of having good abilities." One more extract to preserve an incident which may touch the heart of genius. This extraordinary woman, whose characteristic is that of strong sense with delicacy of feeling, would check her German sentimentality at the moment she was betraying those emotions in which the imagination is so powerfully mixed up with the associated feelings. Arriving at their cottage at Sihlwald, she proceeds—"On enter-

ing the parlour three small pictures, painted by you, met my eyes. I passed some time in contemplating them. It is now a year, thought I, since I saw him trace these pleasing forms; he whistled and sang, and I saw them grow under his pencil; now he is far, far from us.—In short, I had the weakness to press my lips on one of these pictures. You well know, my dear son, that I am not much addicted to scenes of a sentimental turn; but to-day, while I considered your works, I could not restrain from this little impulse of maternal feelings. Do not, however, be apprehensive that the tender affection of a mother will ever lead me too far, or that I shall suffer my mind to be too powerfully impressed with the painful sensations to which your absence gives birth. My reason convinces me that it is for your welfare that you are now in a place where your abilities will have opportunities of unfolding, and where you can become great in your art.”

Such was the incomparable wife and mother of the Gesners!—Will it now be a question whether matrimony is incompatible with the cultivation of the arts? A wife who reanimates the drooping genius of her husband, and a mother who is inspired by the ambition of seeing her sons eminent, is she not the real being which the ancients only personified in their Muse?

CHAPTER XIV.

LITERARY FRIENDSHIPS.

AMONG the virtues which literature inspires, is that of the most romantic friendship. The delirium of love, and even its lighter caprices, are incompatible with the pursuits of the student; but to feel friendship like a passion, is necessary to the mind of genius, alternately elated and depressed, ever prodigal of feeling, and excursive in knowledge.

The qualities which constitute literary friendship, compared with those of men of the world, must render it as rare as true love itself, which it resembles in that intellectual tenderness of which both so deeply participate. Two atoms must meet out of the mass of nature, of such parity, that when they once adhere, they shall be as one, resisting the utmost force of separation. This literary friendship begins "in the dews of their youth," and may be said not to expire on their tomb. Engaged in similar studies, if one is found to excel, he shall find in the other the protector of his fame. In their familiar conversations:

the memory of the one associates with the fancy of the other; and to such an intercourse, the world owes some of the finer effusions of genius, and some of those monuments of labour which required more than one giant hand.

In the poem Cowley composed on the death of his friend Harvey, this stanza opens a pleasing scene of two young literary friends engaged in their midnight studies.

“ Say, for you saw us, ye immortal lights
 How oft unwearied have we spent the nights,
 Till the Ladæan stars, so famed for love,
 Wondered at us from above.
 We spent them not in toys, in lust, or wine ;
 But search of deep philosophy,
 Wit, eloquence, and poetry ;
 Arts which I loved, for they, my friend, were thine.”

Milton has not only given the exquisite Lycidas to the memory of one young friend, but his *Epitaphium Damonis* to another.

Now, mournfully cries the youthful genius,
 as versified by Langhorne,

“ To whom shall I my hopes and fears impart,
 Or trust the cares and follies of my heart ?”

The sonnet of Gray on West, is another beautiful instance of that literary friendship of which we have several instances in our own days, from

the school or the college ; and which have rivalled in devoted affections any which these pages can record.

Such a friendship can never be the lot of men of the world, for it takes its source in the most elevated feelings ; it springs up only in the freshness of nature, and is gathered in the golden age of human life. It is intellectual, and it loves solitude ; for literary friendship has no convivial gaieties and factious assemblies. The friendships of the men of society move on the principle of personal interest, or to relieve themselves from the listlessness of existence ; but interest can easily separate the interested, and as weariness is contagious, the contact of the propagator is watched. Men of the world may look on each other with the same countenances, but not with the same hearts. Literary friendship is a sympathy, not of manners, but of feelings. In the common mart of life may be found intimacies which terminate in complaint and contempt ; the more they know one another, the less is their mutual esteem ; the feeble mind quarrels with one still more imbecil than himself ; the dissolute riot with the dissolute, and while they despise their companions, they too have become despicable.

That perfect unity of feeling, that making of two individuals but one being, is displayed in such memorable friendships as those of Beaumont and Fletcher; whose labours were so combined that no critic can detect the mingled production of either; and whose lives were so closely united, that no biographer can compose the memoirs of the one without running into the life of the other. Their days were as closely interwoven as their verses. Montaigne and Charron, in the eyes of posterity, are rivals, but such literary friendship knows no rivalry; such was Montaigne's affection for Charron, that he requested him by his will to bear the arms of the Montaignes; and Charron evinced his gratitude to the manes of his departed friend, by leaving his fortune to the sister of Montaigne. How pathetically Erasmus mourns over the death of his beloved Sir Thomas More—" *In Moro mihi videor extinctus,*"—" I seem to see myself extinct in More."—It was a melancholy presage of his own death, which shortly after followed. The Doric sweetness and simplicity of old Isaac Walton, the angler, were reflected in a mind as clear and generous, when Charles Cotton continued the feelings, rather than the little work of Walton. Metastasio and Farinelli called each other *il Gemello*, the Twin; and both delighted to trace the resemblance of their lives and fates, and the perpetual alli-

ance of the verse and the voice. Goguet, the author of "The Origin of the Arts and Sciences," bequeathed his MSS. and his books to his friend Fugere, with whom he had long united his affections and his studies, that his surviving friend might proceed with them; but the author had died of a slow and painful disorder, which Fugere had watched by the side of his dying friend, in silent despair; the sight of those MSS. and books was his death-stroke; half his soul which had once given them animation was parted from him, and a few weeks terminated his own days. When Loyd heard of the death of Churchill, he neither wished to survive him nor did. The Abbé de St. Pierre gave an interesting proof of literary friendship for Varignon the geometrician; they were of congenial dispositions, and St. Pierre, when he went to Paris, could not endure to part with Varignon, who was too poor to accompany him; and St. Pierre was not rich. A certain income, however moderate, was necessary for the tranquil pursuits of geometry. St. Pierre presented Varignon with a portion of his small income, accompanied by that delicacy of feeling which men of genius who know each other can best conceive: "I do not give it you," said St. Pierre, "as a salary but an annuity, that thus you may be independent and quit me when you dislike me." The same circumstance occurred between Akenside and Dyson, who, when the poet was

in great danger of adding one more illustrious name to the Calamities of Authors, interposed between him and ill-fortune, by allowing him an annuity of three hundred a-year, and when he found the fame of his literary friend attacked, although not in the habit of composition, Dyson published an able and a curious defence of Aken-side's poetical and philosophical character. The name and character of Dyson have been suffered to die away, without a single tribute of even biographical sympathy; but in the record of literary glory, the patron's name should be inscribed by the side of the literary character; for the public incurs an obligation whenever a man of genius is protected.

The statesman Fouquet, deserted by all others, witnessed La Fontaine hastening every literary man to the prison-gate; many have inscribed their works to their disgraced patron, in the hour

When Int'rest calls off all her sneaking train,
And all the obliged desert, and all the vain,
They wait, or to the scaffold, or the cell,
When the last ling'ring friend has bid farewell.

Such are the friendships of the great literary character! Their elevated minds have raised them into domestic heroes, whose deeds have been often only recorded on that fading register, the human heart.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LITERARY AND THE PERSONAL CHARACTER.

ARE the personal dispositions of an author discoverable in his writings as those of an artist are imagined to appear in his works, where Michael Angelo is always great and Raphael ever graceful ?

Is the moralist a moral man ? Is he malignant who publishes caustic satires ? Is he a libertine who composes loose poems ? And is he whose imagination delights in terror and in blood, the very monster he paints ?

Many licentious writers have led chaste lives. La Mothe le Vayer wrote two works of a free nature ; yet his was the unblemished life of a retired sage. Bayle is the too faithful compiler of impurities, but he resisted the corruption of the senses as much as Newton. La Fontaine wrote tales fertile in intrigues, yet the " bon homme " has not left on record a single ingenious amour. Smollet's character is immaculate ; yet he has described two scenes which offend even in the freedom of imagination. Cowley, who boasts with such gaiety of the versatility of his passion among so many mistresses, wanted even the confidence to address one. Thus, licentious writers

may be very chaste men; for the imagination may be a volcano, while the heart is an Alp of ice.

Turn to the moralist—there we find Seneca, the disinterested usurer of seven millions, writing on moderate desires, on a table of gold. Sallust, who so eloquently declaims against the licentiousness of the age, was repeatedly accused in the Senate of public and habitual debaucheries; and when this inveigher against the spoilers of provinces attained to a remote government, Sallust pillaged like Verres. Lucian, when young, declaimed against the friendship of the great, as another name for servitude; but when his talents procured him a situation under the Emperor, he facetiously compared himself to those quacks, who themselves plagued with a perpetual cough, offer to sell an infallible remedy for one. Sir Thomas More, in his Utopia, declares that no man ought to be punished for his religion; yet he became a fierce persecutor, racking and burning men when his own true faith here was at the ebb. At the moment the Poet Rosseau was giving versions of the Psalms, full of unction, as our neighbours say, he was profaning the same pen with the most infamous of epigrams. We have heard of an erotic poet of our times composing sacred poetry, or night-hymns in church-yards. The pathetic genius of Sterne played about his head, but never reached his heart.

And thus with the personal dispositions of an author, which may be quite the reverse from those which appear in his writings. Johnson would not believe that Horace was a happy man, because his verses were cheerful, no more than he could think Pope so, because he is continually informing us of it. Young, who is constantly contemning preferment in his writings, was all his life pining after it; and while the sombrous author of the "Night Thoughts" was composing them, he was as cheerful as any other man; he was as lively in conversation as he was gloomy in his writings: and when a lady expressed her surprise at his social converse, he replied—"There is much difference between writing and talking." Molière, on the contrary, whose humour was so perfectly comic, and even ludicrous, was a very thoughtful and serious man, and perhaps even of a melancholy temper: his strongly-featured physiognomy exhibits the face of a great tragic, rather than of a great comic, poet. Could one have imagined that the brilliant wit, the luxuriant raillery, and the fine and deep sense of Paschal could have combined with the most opposite qualities—the hypochondriasm and bigotry of an ascetic? Rochefoucauld, says the eloquent Dugald Stewart, in private life was a conspicuous example of all those moral qualities of which he seemed to deny the existence, and exhibited in this respect a striking contrast to the

Cardinal De Retz, who has presumed to censure him for his want of faith in the reality of virtue ; and to which we must add, that De Retz was one of those pretended patriots without a single of those virtues for which he was the clamorous advocate of faction. When Valincour attributed the excessive tenderness in the tragedies of Racine to the poet's own impassioned character, the younger Racine amply showed that his father was by no means this slave of love ; that his intercourse with a certain actress was occasioned by his pains to form her, who with a fine voice, and memory, and beauty, was incapable of comprehending the verses she recited, or accompanying them with any natural gesture. The tender Racine never wrote a single love poem, nor had a mistress ; and his wife had never read his tragedies, for poetry was not her delight. Racine's motive for making love the constant source of action in his tragedies, was on the principle which has influenced so many poets, who usually conform to the prevalent taste of the times. In the court of a young monarch, it was necessary that heroes should be lovers ; and since Corneille had so nobly run in one career, Racine could not have existed as a great poet, had he not rivalled him in an opposite one. The tender Racine was no lover ; but he was a subtle and epigrammatic observer, before whom his convivial friends never

cared to open their minds. It is not therefore surprising if we are often erroneous in the conception we form of the personal character of a distant author. Klopstock, the votary of Zion's muse, so astonished and warmed the sage Bodmer, that he invited the inspired bard to his house ; but his visitor shocked the grave professor, when, instead of a poet rapt in silent meditation, a volatile youth leapt out of the chaise, who was an enthusiast for retirement only when writing verses. An artist whose pictures exhibit a series of scenes of domestic tenderness, awakening all the charities of private life, participated in them in no other way than on his canvass. Evelyn, who has written in favour of active life, loved and lived in retirement ; while Sir George Mackenzie framed an eulogium on solitude, who had been continually in the bustle of business.

Thus an author and an artist may yield no certain indication of their personal character in their works. Inconstant men will write on constancy, and licentious minds may elevate themselves into poetry and piety. And were this not so, we should be unjust to some of the greatest geniuses, when the extraordinary sentiments they put into the mouths of their dramatic personages are maliciously applied to themselves. Euripides

pides was accused of atheism, when he made a denier of the gods appear on the stage. Milton has been censured by Clarke for the impiety of Satan; and it was possible that an enemy of Shakespeare might have reproached him for his perfect delineation of the accomplished villain Iago; as it was said that Dr. Moore was sometimes hurt in the opinions of some, by his horrid Zeluco. Crebillon complains of this.—“They charge me with all the iniquities of Atreus, and they consider me in some places as a wretch with whom it is unfit to associate; as if all which the mind invents must be derived from the heart.” This poet offers a striking instance of the little alliance existing between the literary and personal dispositions of an author. Crebillon, who exulted on his entrance into the French academy, that he had never tinged his pen with the gall of satire, delighted to strike on the most harrowing string of the tragic lyre. In his *Atreus*, the father drinks the blood of his son; in *Rhadamistus*, the son expires under the hand of the father; in *Electra*, the son assassinates the mother. A poet is a painter of the soul; but a great artist is not therefore a bad man.

Montaigne appears to have been sensible of this fact in the literary character. Of authors, he says, he likes to read their little anecdotes and

private passions; and adds, "Car j'ai une singulière curiosité de connoître l'ame et les naïfs jugemens de mes auteurs. Il faut bien juger leur suffisance, mais non pas leurs moeurs, ni eux, par cette montre de leurs écrits qu'ils étalent au théâtre du monde." Which may be thus translated— "For I have a singular curiosity to know the soul and simple opinions of my authors. We must judge of their ability, but not of their manners, nor of themselves, by that show of their writings which they display on the theatre of the world." This is very just, and are we yet convinced, that the simplicity of this old favourite of Europe, might not have been as much a theatrical gesture, as the sentimentality of Sterne?

We must not therefore consider that he who paints vice with energy is therefore vicious, lest we injure an honourable man; nor must we imagine that he who celebrates virtue is therefore virtuous, for we may then repose on a heart which knowing the right pursues the wrong.

These paradoxical appearances in the history of genius present a curious moral phenomenon. Much must be attributed to the plastic nature of the versatile faculty itself. Men of genius have often resisted the indulgence of one talent to exercise another with equal power; some, who have

solely composed sermons, could have touched on the foibles of society with the spirit of Horace or Juvenal; Blackstone and Sir William Jones directed that genius to the austere studies of law and philology, which might have excelled in the poetical and historical character. So versatile is this faculty of genius, that its possessors are sometimes uncertain of the manner in which they shall treat their subject; whether to be grave or ludicrous? When Breboeuf, the French translator of the Pharsalia of Lucan, had completed the first book as it now appears, he at the same time composed a burlesque version, and sent both to the great arbiter of taste in that day, to decide which the poet should continue? The decision proved to be difficult. Are there not writers who can brew a tempest or fling a sunshine with all the vehemence of genius at their will? They adopt one principle, and all things shrink into the pigmy forms of ridicule; they change it, and all rise to startle us, with animated Colossuses. On this principle of the versatility of the faculty, a production of genius is a piece of art which wrought up to its full effect is merely the result of certain combinations of the mind, with a felicity of manner obtained by taste and habit.

Are we then to reduce the works of a man of genius to a mere sport of his talents; a game

in which he is only the best player? Can he whose secret power raises so many emotions in our breasts, be without any in his own? A mere actor performing a part? Is he unfeeling when he is pathetic, indifferent when he is indignant? An alien to all the wisdom and virtue he inspires? No! were men of genius themselves to assert this, and it is said some incline to it, there is a more certain conviction, than their mistakes, in our own consciousness, which for ever assures us, that deep feelings and elevated thoughts must spring from their source.

In proving that the character of the man may be very opposite to that of his writings, we must recollect that the habits of life may be contrary to the habits of the mind. The influence of their studies over men of genius, is limited; out of the ideal world, man is reduced to be the active creature of sensation. An author has, in truth, two distinct characters; the literary, formed by the habits of his study; the personal, by the habits of situation. Gray, cold, effeminate and timid in his personal, was lofty and awful in his literary character; we see men of polished manners and bland affections, in grasping a pen, are thrusting a poignard; while others in domestic life, with the simplicity of children and the feebleness of nervous affections, can shake the senate

or the bar with the vehemence of their eloquence and the intrepidity of their spirit.

And, however the personal character may contrast with that of their genius, still are the works themselves genuine, and exist in realities for us—and were so doubtless to themselves, in the act of composition. In the calm of study, a beautiful imagination may convert him whose morals are corrupt, into an admirable moralist, awakening feelings which yet may be cold in the business of life; since we have shown that the phlegmatic can excite himself into wit, and the cheerful man delight in Night-thoughts. Sallust, the corrupt Sallust, might retain the most sublime conceptions of the virtues which were to save the Republic; and Sterne, whose heart was not so susceptible in ordinary occurrences, while he was gradually creating incident after incident, touching the emotions one after another, in the stories of *Le Fevre* and *Maria*, might have thrilled—like some of his readers.*

* Long after this was written, and while this volume was passing through the press, I discovered a new incident in the life of Sterne, which verifies my conjecture. By some unpublished letters of Sterne's in Mr. Murray's Collection of Autographical Letters, it appears that early in life, he deeply fixed the affections of a young lady, during a period of five years, and for some cause I know not, he suddenly deserted her, and married another. The young lady was too sensible of

Many have mourned over the wisdom or the virtue they contemplated, mortified at their own infirmities. Thus, though there may be no identity between the book and the man, still for us, an author is ever an abstract being; and, as one of the Fathers said, "a dead man may sin dead, leaving books that make others sin." An author's wisdom or his folly does not die with him. The volume, not the author, is our companion, and is for us a real personage, performing before us whatever it inspires; "he being dead, yet speaketh." Such is the vitality of a book!

this act of treachery; she lost her senses and was confined in a private mad-house, where Sterne twice visited her. He has drawn and coloured the picture of her madness, which he himself had occasioned! This fact only adds to some which have so deeply injured the sentimental character of this author, and the whole spurious race of his wretched apes. His life was loose, and shandean, his principles unsettled, and it does not seem that our wit bore a single attraction of personal affection about him; for his death was characteristic of his life. Sterne died at his lodgings, with neither friend nor relative by his side; a hired nurse was the sole companion of the man whose wit found admirers in every street, but whose heart could not draw one by his death-bed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAN OF LETTERS.

AMONG the more active members of the republic there is a class to whom may be appropriately assigned the title of MEN OF LETTERS.

The man of letters, whose habits and whose whole life so closely resemble those of an author, can only be distinguished by the simple circumstance, that the man of letters is not an author.

Yet he whose sole occupation through life is literature, who is always acquiring and never producing, appears as ridiculous as the architect who never raised an edifice, or the statuary who refrains from sculpture. His pursuits are reproached with terminating in an epicurean selfishness, and amidst his incessant avocations he himself is considered as a particular sort of idler.

This race of literary characters, as they now exist, could not have appeared till the press had poured its affluence ; in the degree that the nations of Europe became literary, was that philosophical curiosity kindled, which induced some

to devote their fortunes and their days, and to experience some of the purest of human enjoyments, in preserving and familiarising themselves with “the monuments of vanished minds,” that indestructible history of the genius of every people, through all its æras—and whatever men have thought and whatever men have done, were at length discovered to be found in Books.

Men of letters occupy an intermediate station between authors and readers; with more curiosity of knowledge and more multiplied tastes, and by those precious collections which they are forming during their lives, more completely furnished with the means than are possessed by the multitude who read, and the few who write.

The studies of an author are usually restricted to particular subjects; his tastes are tinged by their colouring, and his mind is always shaping itself to them. An author's works form his solitary pride, and often mark the boundaries of his empire; while half his life wears away in the slow maturity of composition; and still the ambition of authorship torments its victim alike in disappointment or in possession.

But the solitude of the man of letters is soothed by the surrounding objects of his passion; he possesses them, and they possess him. His volumes

in triple rows on their shelves; his portfolios, those moveable galleries of pictures and sketches; his rich *medaillier* of coins and gems, that library without books; some favourite sculptures and paintings, on which his eye lingers as they catch a magical light; and some antiquities of all nations, here and there, about his house; these are his furniture! Every thing about him is so endeared to him by habit, and many higher associations, that even to quit his collections for a short time becomes a real suffering; he is one of the *lief-hebbers* of the Hollanders—a lover or fancier.* He lives where he will die; often his library and his chamber are contiguous, and this “*Parva, sed apta,*” this contracted space, has often marked the boundary of the existence of the opulent owner.

His invisible days flow on in this visionary world of literature and art; all the knowledge, and all the tastes, which genius has ever created are transplanted into his cabinet; there they flourish together in an atmosphere of their own. But tranquillity is essential to his existence; for though his occupations are interrupted without inconvenience, and resumed without effort, yet

* The Dutch call every thing for which they have a passion *lief-hebberge*—things having their love; and as their feeling is much stronger than their delicacy, they apply the term to every thing, from poesy and picture to tulips and tobacco. *Lief-hobbers* are lovers or fanciers.

if the realities of life, with all their unquiet thoughts, are suffered to enter into his ideal world, they will be felt as if something were flung with violence among the trees where the birds are singing,—all would instantly disperse!

Such is that life of self-oblivion of the man of letters, for which so many have voluntarily relinquished a public station; or their rank in society; neglecting even fortune and health. Of the pleasures of the man of letters it may be said, they combine those opposite sources of enjoyment observed in the hunter and the angler. Of a great hunter it was said, that he did not live but hunted; and the man of letters, in his perpetual researches, feels the like heat, and the joy of discovery, in his own chase; while in the deep calm of his spirits, such is the sweetness of his uninterrupted hours, like those of the angler, that one may say of him what Colonel Venables, an enthusiastic angler, declared of his favourite pursuit, “many have cast off other recreations and embraced this; but I never knew any angler wholly cast off, though occasions might interrupt, their affections to their beloved recreation.”

But “men of the world,” as they are so emphatically distinguished, imagine that a man so life-

less in "the world" must be one of the dead in it, and, with mistaken wit, would inscribe over the sepulchre of his library, "Here lies the body of our friend." If the man of letters has voluntarily quitted their "world," at least he has past into another, where he enjoys a sense of existence through a long succession of ages, and where Time, who destroys all things for others, for him only preserves and discovers. This world is best described by one who has lingered among its inspirations. "We are wafted into other times and strange lands, connecting us by a sad but exalting relationship with the great events and great minds which have passed away. Our studies at once cherish and controul the imagination, by leading it over an unbounded range of the noblest scenes in the overawing company of departed wisdom and genius."*

If the man of letters is less dependent on others for the very perception of his own existence, his solitude is not that of a desert, but of the most cultivated humanity; for all there tends to keep alive those concentrated feelings which cannot be indulged with security, or even without ridicule, in general society. Like the Lucullus of Plutarch, he would not only live among the votaries of literature, but would live

* Quarterly Review, No. XXXIII. p. 145.

for them ; he throws open his library, his gallery, and his cabinet, to all the Grecians. Such are the men who father neglected genius, or awaken its infancy by the perpetual legacy of the " Prizes" of Literature and science ; who project those benevolent institutions, where they have poured out the philanthropy of their hearts in that world which they appear to have forsaken. If Europe is literary, to whom does she owe this, more than to these men of letters ? To their noble passion of amassing through life those magnificent collections, which often bear the names of their founders from the gratitude of a following age ? Venice, Florence, and Copenhagen, Oxford and London, attest the existence of their labours. Our Bodleys and our Harleys, our Cottons and our Sloanes, our Cracherodes and our Townleys, were of this race ! In the perpetuity of their own studies, they felt as if they were extending human longevity, by throwing an unbroken light of knowledge into the next age. Each of these public works, for such they become, was the project and the execution of a solitary man of letters during half a century ; the generous enthusiasm which inspired their intrepid labours ; the difficulties overcome ; the voluntary privations of what the world calls its pleasures and its honours, would form an interesting history not yet written ; their due, yet undischarged.

Living more with books than with men, the man of letters is more tolerant of opinions than they are among themselves, nor are his views of human affairs contracted to the day, as those who in the heat and hurry of life can act only on expedients, and not on principles; who deem themselves politicians because they are not moralists; to whom the centuries behind have conveyed no results, and who cannot see how the present time is always full of the future; as Leibnitz has expressed a profound reflection. "Every thing," says the lively Burnet, "must be brought to the nature of tinder or gunpowder, ready for a spark to set it on fire," before they discover it. The man of letters is accused of a cold indifference to the interests which divide society. In truth, he knows their miserable beginnings and their certain terminations; he is therefore rarely observed as the head, or the rump, of a party.

Antiquity presents such a man of letters in Atticus, who retreated from a political to a literary life; had his letters accompanied those of Cicero they would have illustrated the ideal character of a man of letters. But the sage Atticus rejected a popular celebrity for a passion not less powerful, yielding up his whole soul to study. Cicero, with all his devotion to literature, was still agitated by another kind of glory, and the

most perfect author in Rome imagined that he was enlarging his honours by the intrigues of the consulship. He has distinctly marked the character of the man of letters in the person of his friend Atticus, and has expressed his respect, although he could not content himself with its imitation. "I know," says this man of genius and ambition, "I know the greatness and ingenuousness of your soul, nor have I found any difference between us, but in a different choice of life; a certain sort of ambition has led me earnestly to seek after honours, while other motives, by no means blameable, induced you to adopt an honourable leisure; *honestum otium*."*

These motives appear in the interesting memoirs of this man of letters—a contempt of political intrigues with a desire to escape from the bustle and splendour of Rome to the learned leisure of Athens; to dismiss a pompous train of slaves for the delight of assembling under his roof a literary society of readers and transcribers; and there having collected the portraits or busts of the illustrious men of his country, he caught their spirit, and was influenced by their virtues or their genius, as he inscribed under them, in concise verses, the characters of their mind. Valuing wealth only for its use, a dignified economy enabled him to be profuse, and a moderate expenditure allowed him to be generous.

* Ad Atticum, Lib. i. Ep. 17.

The result of this literary life was the strong affections of the Athenians; at the first opportunity, the absence of the man of letters offered, they raised a statue to him, conferring on our Pomponius the fond surname of Atticus. To have received a name from the voice of the city they inhabited, has happened to more than one man of letters. Pinelli, born a Neapolitan, but residing at Venice, among other peculiar honours received from the senate, was there distinguished by the affectionate title of "the Venetian."

Yet such a character as Atticus could not escape censure from "men of the world;" they want the heart and the imagination to conceive something better than themselves. The happy indifference, perhaps the contempt, of our Atticus for rival factions, they have stigmatised as a cold neutrality, and a timid cowardly hypocrisy. Yet Atticus could not have been a mutual friend, had both not alike held the man of letters as a sacred being amidst their disguised ambition; and the urbanity of Atticus, while it balanced the fierceness of two heroes, Pompey and Cæsar, could even temper the rivalry of genius in the orators Hortensius and Cicero. A great man of our own country widely differed from the accusers of Atticus; Sir Matthew Hale lived in times distracted, and took the character of our man of letters for his model, adopting two principles in

the conduct of Atticus; engaging with no party or public business, and affording a constant relief to the unfortunate of whatever party, he was thus preserved amidst the contests of the times. Even Cicero himself, in his happier moments, in addressing his friend, exclaims—"I had much rather be sitting on your little bench under Aristotle's picture, than in the curule chairs of our great ones." This wish was probably sincere, and reminds us of another great politician in his secession from public affairs, retreating to a literary life, when he appears suddenly to have discovered a new-found world. Fox's favourite line, which he often repeated, was,

"How various his employments whom the world
Calls idle."

Cowper.

If the personal interests of the man of letters are not too deeply involved in society, his individual prosperity however is never contrary to public happiness. Other professions necessarily exist by the conflict and the calamities of the community; the politician is great by hatching an intrigue; the lawyer in counting his briefs; the physician his sick-list; the soldier is clamorous for war, and the merchant riots on the public calamity of high prices. But the man of letters only calls for peace and books, to unite himself with his brothers scattered over Europe;

and his usefulness can only be felt, when, after a long interchange of destruction, men during short intervals, recovering their senses, discover that "knowledge is power."

Of those eminent men of letters, who were not authors, the history of Peiresc opens the most enlarged view of their activity. This moving picture of a literary life had been lost for us, had not Peiresc found in Gassendi a twin-spirit; so intimate was that biographer with the very thoughts, so closely united in the same pursuits, and so perpetual an observer of the remarkable man whom he has immortalized, that when employed on this elaborate resemblance of his friend, he was only painting himself with all the identifying strokes of self-love.

It was in the vast library of Pinelli, the founder of the most magnificent one in Europe, that Peiresc, then a youth, felt the remote hope of emulating the man of letters before his eyes. His life was not without preparation, not without fortunate coincidences, but there was a grandeur of design in the execution, which originated in the genius of the man himself.

The curious genius of Peiresc was marked by its precocity, as usually are strong passions

in strong minds; this was the germ of all those studies which seemed mature in his youth. He resolved on a personal intercourse with the great literary characters of Europe; and his friend has thrown over these literary travels, that charm of detail by which we accompany Peiresc into the libraries of the learned; there with the historian opening new sources of history, or with the critic correcting manuscripts, and settling points of erudition; or by the opened cabinet of the antiquary, decyphering obscure inscriptions, and explaining medals; in the galleries of the curious in art, among their marbles, their pictures and their prints, he has often revealed to the artist some secret in his own art. In the museum of the naturalist, or among the plants of the botanist, there was no rarity of nature, and no work of art on which he had not to communicate; his mind toiled with that impatience of knowledge, that becomes a pain only in the cessation of rest. In England Peiresc was the associate of Camden and Selden, and had more than one interview with that friend to literary men, our calumniated James I.; one may judge by these who were the men whom he first sought, and by whom he himself ever after was sought. Such indeed were immortal friendships! immortal they may be justly called, from the objects in which they concerned themselves, and from the permanent results of their combined studies.

Another peculiar greatness in this literary character was his enlarged devotion to literature for itself; he made his own universal curiosity the source of knowledge to other men; considering the studious as forming but one great family wherever they were, the national repositories of knowledge in Europe, for Peiresc, formed but one collection for the world. This man of letters had possessed himself of their contents, that he might have manuscripts collated, unedited pieces explored, extracts supplied, and even draughtsmen employed in remote parts of the world, to furnish views and plans, and to copy antiquities for the student, who in some distant retirement discovered that the literary treasures of the world were unfailingly opened to him by the secret devotion of this man of letters.

Carrying on the same grandeur in his views, Europe could not limit his inextinguishable curiosity; his universal mind busied itself in every part of the habitable globe. He kept up a noble traffic with all travellers, supplying them with philosophical instruments and recent inventions, by which he facilitated their discoveries, and secured their reception even in barbarous realms; in return he claimed, at his own cost, for he was "born rather to give than to receive," Says Gassendi, fresh importations

of oriental literature, curious antiquities, or botanic rarities, and it was the curiosity of Peiresc which first embellished his own garden, and thence the gardens of Europe, with a rich variety of exotic flowers and fruits. Whenever he was presented with a medal, a vase, or a manuscript, he never slept over the gift till he had discovered what the donor delighted in; and a book, a picture, or a plant, when money could not be offered, fed their mutual passion and sustained the general cause of science.—The correspondence of Peiresc branched out to the farthest bounds of Ethiopia, connected both Americas, and had touched the newly discovered extremities of the universe, when this intrepid mind closed in a premature death.

I have drawn this imperfect view of Peiresc's character, that men of letters may be reminded of the capacities they possess. There still remains another peculiar feature. With all these vast views the fortune of Peiresc was not great; and when he sometimes endured the reproach of those whose sordidness was startled at this prodigality of mind, and the great objects which were the result, Peiresc replied that "a small matter suffices for the natural wants of a literary man, whose true wealth consists in the monuments of arts, the treasures of his library, and the brotherly affections of the ingenious." He

was a French judge, but supported the dignity more by his own character than by luxury or parade. He would not wear silk, and no tapestry hangings ornamented his apartments; but the walls were covered with the portraits of his literary friends: and in the unadorned simplicity of his study, his books, his papers, and his letters were scattered about him on the tables, the seats, and the floor. There, stealing from the world, he would sometimes admit to his spare supper his friend Gassendi, "content," says that amiable philosopher, "to have me for his guest."

Peiresc, like Pinelli, never published any work. Few days, indeed, passed without Peiresc writing a letter on the most curious inquiries; epistles which might be considered as so many little books, observes Gassendi.* These men of letters derived their pleasure, and perhaps their pride,

* The history of the letters of Peiresc is remarkable. He preserved copies of his entire correspondence; but it has been recorded that many of these epistles were consumed, to save fuel, by the obstinate avarice of a niece. This would not have been a solitary instance of eminent men leaving their collections to unworthy descendants. However, after the silence of more than a century, some of these letters have been recovered, and may be found in some French journals of A. Millin. They descended from the gentleman who married this very niece, probably the remains of the collection. The letters answer to the description of Gassendi, full of curious knowledge and observation.

from those vast strata of knowledge which their curiosity had heaped together in their mighty collections. They either were not endowed with that faculty of genius which strikes out aggregate views, or with the talent of composition which embellishes minute ones. This deficiency in the minds of such may be attributed to a thirst of learning, which the very means to allay can only inflame. From all sides they are gathering information; and that knowledge seems never perfect to which every day brings new acquisitions. With these men, to compose is to hesitate; and to revise is to be mortified by fresh doubts and unsupplied omissions. Peiresc was employed all his life in a history of Provence; and day after day he was adding to the splendid mass. But "Peiresc," observes Gassendi, "could not mature the birth of his literary offspring, or lick it into any shape of elegant form; he was therefore content to take the midwife's part, by helping the happier labours of others."

Such are the silent cultivators of knowledge, who are rarely authors, but who are often, however, contributing to the works of authors: without their secret labours, the public would not have possessed many valued works. That curious knowledge of books which, since Europe has become literary, is both the beginning and

the result of knowledge ; and literary history itself, which is the history of the age, of the nation and of the individual, one of the important consequences of these vast collections of books, has almost been created in our own times. These sources, which offer so much delightful instruction to the author and the artist, are separate studies from the cultivation of literature and the arts, and constitute more particularly the province of these men of letters.

The philosophical writer, who can adorn the page of history, is not always equal to form it. Robertson, after his successful history of Scotland, was long irresolute in his designs, and so unpractised in researches of the sort he was desirous of attempting, that his admirers had nearly lost his popular productions, had not a fortunate introduction to Dr. Birch enabled him to open the clasped books, and to drink of the sealed fountains. Robertson has confessed his inadequate knowledge and his overflowing gratitude, in letters which I have elsewhere printed. A suggestion by a man of letters has opened the career of many an aspirant ; a hint from Walsh conveyed a new conception of English poetry to one of its masters. The celebrated treatise of Grotius, on "Peace and War," was projected by Peiresc. It was said of Magliabechi, who knew all books and never wrote one, that by

his diffusive communications he was in some respect concerned in all the great works of his times. Sir Robert Cotton greatly assisted Camden and Speed; and that hermit of literature, Baker of Cambridge, was still supplying with his invaluable researches, Burnet, Kennet, Hearne, of Middleton. Such is the concealed aid which these men of letters afford our authors, and which we may compare to those subterraneous streams, which flowing into spacious lakes, are still, unobserved, enlarging the waters which attract the public eye.

Such are these men of letters! but the last touches of their picture, given with all the delicacy and warmth of a self-painter, may come from the Count de Caylus, celebrated for his collections and for his generous patronage of artists.

“ His glory is confined to the mere power which he has of being one day useful to letters and to the arts; for his whole life is employed in collecting materials of which learned men and artists make no use till after the death of him who amassed them. It affords him a very sensible pleasure to labour in hopes of being useful to those who pursue the same course of studies, while there are so great a number who die without discharging the debt which they incur to society.”

CHAPTER XVII.

LITERARY OLD AGE.

THE old age of the literary character retains its enjoyments, and usually its powers,—a happiness which accompanies no other. The old age of coquetry with extinct beauty; that of the used idler left without a sensation; that of a grasping Cræsus, who envies his heir; or that of the Machiavel who has no longer a voice in the cabinet, makes all these persons resemble unhappy spirits who cannot find their graves. But for the aged man of letters memory returns to her stores, and imagination is still on the wing, amidst fresh discoveries and new designs. The others fall like dry leaves, but he like ripe fruit, and is valued when no longer on the tree.

The intellectual faculties, the latest to decline, are often vigorous in the decrepitude of age. The curious mind is still striking out into new pursuits; and the mind of genius is still creating. *ANCORA IMPARO!*—"Yet I am learning!" Such was the concise inscription of an ingenious device of an old man placed in a child's go-cart, with an hour-glass upon it, which Michael Ange-

lo applied to his own vast genius in his ninetieth year.*

Time, the great destroyer of other men's happiness, only enlarges the patrimony of literature to its possessor. A learned and highly intellectual friend once said to me, "If I have acquired more knowledge these last four years than I had hitherto, I shall add materially to my stores in the next four years; and so at every subsequent period of my life, should I acquire only in the same proportion, the general mass of my knowledge will greatly accumulate. If we are not deprived by nature or misfortune, of the means to pursue this perpetual augmentation of knowledge, I do not see but we may be still fully occupied and deeply interested even to the last day of our earthly term." In such pursuits, where life is rather wearing out, than rusting out, as Bishop Cumberland expressed it, death scarcely can take us by surprise; and much less by those continued menaces which shake the old age of men, of no intellectual pursuits, who are dying so many years.

* This characteristic form closes the lectures of Mr. Fuseil, who thus indirectly reminds us of the last words of Reynolds; and the graver of Blake, vital as the pencil of Fuseli, has raised the person of Michael Angelo with its admirable portrait, breathing inspiration.

Active enjoyments in the decline of life, then, constitute the happiness of literary men; the study of the arts and literature spread a sunshine in the winter of their days; and their own works may be as delightful to themselves, as roses plucked by the Norwegian amidst his snows; and they will discover that unregarded kindness of nature, who has given flowers that only open in the evening, and flower through the night-time. Necker offers a beautiful instance even of the influence of late studies in life; for he tells us, that "the era of three-score and ten is an agreeable age for writing; your mind has not lost its vigour, and envy leaves you in peace." The opening of one of La Mothe le Vayer's Treatises is striking: "I should but ill return the favours God has granted me in the eightieth year of my age, should I allow myself to give way to that shameless want of occupation which I have condemned all my life;" and the old man proceeds with his "observations on the composition and reading of books." The literary character has been fully occupied in the eightieth and the ninetieth year of life. Isaac Walton still glowed while writing some of the most interesting biographies in his eighty-fifth year, and in his ninetieth enriched the poetical world with the first publication of a romantic tale by Chalkhill, "the friend of Spenser." Bodmer, beyond eighty, was occupied on Homer,

and Wieland on Cicero's Letters.* But the delight of opening a new pursuit, or a new course of reading, imparts the vivacity and novelty of youth even to old age; the revolutions of modern chemistry kindled the curiosity of Dr. Reid to his latest days; and a deservedly popular author, now advanced in life, at this moment, has discovered, in a class of reading to which he had never been accustomed, what will probably supply him with fresh furniture for his mind during life. Even the steps of time are retraced, and what has passed away again becomes ours; for in advanced life a return to our early studies refreshes and renovates the spirits; we open the poets who made us enthusiasts, and the philosophers who taught us to think, with a new source of feeling in our own experience. Adam Smith confessed his satisfaction at this pleasure to professor Dugald Stewart, while "he was reperusing, with the enthusiasm of a student, the tragic poets of ancient Greece, and Sophocles and Euripides lay open on his table."

Dans ses veines toujours un jeune sang bouillonne,
Et Sophocle à cent ans peint encore Antigone.

The calm philosophic Hume found death only could interrupt the keen pleasure he was again receiving from Lucian, and which could inspire

* See *Curiosities of Literature* on "The progress of old age in new studies," Vol. i. 170. Sixth Edition.

him at the moment with a humorous self-dialogue with Charon.

Not without a sense of exultation has the literary character felt this happiness, in the unbroken chain of his habits and his feelings. Hobbes exulted that he had outlived his enemies, and was still the same Hobbes; and to demonstrate the reality of this existence, published, in the eighty-seventh year of his age, his version of the *Odyssey*, and the following year, his *Iliad*. Of the happy results of literary habits in advanced life, the Count de Tressan, the elegant abridger of the old French romances, in his "literary advice to his children," has drawn a most pleasing picture. With a taste for study, which he found rather inconvenient in the moveable existence of a man of the world, and a military wanderer, he had however contrived to reserve an hour or two every day for literary pursuits; the men of science, with whom he had chiefly associated, appear to have turned his passion to observation and knowledge, rather than towards imagination and feeling; the combination formed a wreath for his grey hairs. When Count de Tressan retired from a brilliant to an affectionate circle, amidst his family, he pursued his literary tastes, with the vivacity of a young author inspired by the illusion of fame. At the age of seventy-five, with the imagination

of a poet, he abridged, he translated, he recomposed his old Chivalric Romances, and his reanimated fancy struck fire in the veins of the old man. Among the first designs of his retirement was a singular philosophical legacy for his children; it was a view of the history and progress of the human mind—of its principles, its errors, and its advantages, as these were reflected in himself; in the dawnings of his taste, the secret inclinations of his mind, which the men of genius of the age with whom he associated had developed; in expatiating on their memory, he calls on his children to witness the happiness of study, in those pleasures which were soothing and adorning his old age. “Without knowledge, without literature,” exclaims the venerable enthusiast, “in whatever rank we are born, we can only resemble the vulgar.” To the Centenary Fontenelle the Count de Tressan was chiefly indebted for the happy life he derived from the cultivation of literature; and when this man of a hundred years died, Tressan, himself on the borders of the grave, would offer the last fruits of his mind in an eulogy to his ancient master; it was the voice of the dying to the dead, a last moment of the love and sensibility of genius, which feeble life could not extinguish.

If the genius of Cicero, inspired by the love of literature, has thrown something delightful over this latest season of life, in his *de Senectute*; and if to have written on old age, in old age, is to have obtained a triumph over time,* the literary character, when he shall discover himself like a stranger in a new world, when all that he loved has not life, and all that lives has no love for old age; when he shall find himself grown obsolete, when his ear shall cease to listen, and nature has locked up the man entirely within himself, even then the votary of literature shall not feel the decline of life;—preserving the flame alive on the altar, and even at his last moments, in the act of sacrifice. Such was the fate, perhaps now told for the first time, of the great Lord Clarendon; it was in the midst of composition that his pen suddenly fell from his hand on the paper, he took it up again, and again it fell; deprived of the sense of touch, he found his hand without motion; the ear perceived himself struck by palsy—and thus was the life of the noble exile closed amidst the warmth of a literary work, unfinished.

* *Spurinna, or the Comforts of Old Age*, by Sir Thomas Bernard.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LITERARY HONOURS.

LITERATURE is an avenue to glory, ever open for those ingenious men who are deprived of honours or of wealth. Like that illustrious Roman who owed nothing to his ancestors, *videtur ex se natus*, they seem self-born; and in the baptism of fame, they have given themselves their name. The sons of a sword-maker, a potter, and a tax-gatherer, were the greatest of Orators, the most majestic of poets, and the most graceful of the satirists of antiquity. The eloquent Massillon, the brilliant Flechier, Rousseau and Diderot; Johnson, Akenside, and Franklin, arose amidst the most humble avocations.

It is the prerogative of genius to elevate obscure men to the higher class of society; if the influence of wealth in the present day has been justly said to have created a new aristocracy of its own, and where they already begin to be jealous of their ranks, we may assert that genius creates a sort of intellectual nobility, which is conferred on some Literary Characters by the involuntary feelings of the public; and were

men of genius to bear arms, they might consist not of imaginary things, of griffins and chimeras, but of deeds performed and of public works in existence. When Dondi raised the great astronomical clock at the University of Padua which was long the admiration of Europe, it gave a name and nobility to its maker and all his descendants; there still lives a Marquis Dondi dal' Horologio. Sir Hugh Middleton, in memory of his vast enterprise, changed his former arms to bear three piles, by which instruments he had strengthened the works he had invented, when his genius poured forth the waters through our metropolis, distinguishing it from all others in the world. Should not Evelyn have inserted an oak-tree in his bearings? for our author's "Sylva" occasioned the plantation of "many millions of timber-trees," and the present navy of Great Britain has been constructed with the oaks which the genius of Evelyn planted. If the public have borrowed the names of some Lords to grace a Sandwich and a Spencer, we may be allowed to raise into titles of literary nobility those distinctions which the public voice has attached to some authors; *Æschylus* Potter, *Athenian* Stuart, and *Anacreon* Moore.

This intellectual nobility is not chimerical; does it not separate a man from the crowd? When-

ever the rightful possessor appears, will not the eyes of all spectators be fixed on him? I allude to scenes which I have witnessed. Will not even literary honours add a nobility to nobility? and teach the nation to esteem a name which might otherwise be hidden under its rank, and remain unknown? Our illustrious list of literary noblemen is far more glorious than the satirical "Catalogue of Noble Authors," drawn up by a polished and heartless cynic, who has pointed his brilliant shafts at all who were chivalrous in spirit, or appertained to the family of genius. One may presume on the existence of this intellectual nobility, from the extraordinary circumstance that the Great have actually felt a jealousy of the literary rank. But no rivalry can exist in the solitary honour conferred on an author; an honour not derived from birth, nor creation, but from PUBLIC OPINION; and as inseparable from his name, as an essential quality is from its object; for the diamond will sparkle and the rose will be fragrant, otherwise, it is no diamond nor rose. The great may well condescend to be humble to Genius, since genius pays its homage in becoming proud of that humility. Cardinal Richelieu was mortified at the celebrity of the unbending Corneille; several noblemen were at Pope's indifference to their rank; and Magliabechi, the book-prodigy of his age, whom every literary stranger visited at

Florence, assured Lord Raley, that the Duke of Tuscany had become jealous of the attention he was receiving from foreigners, as they usually went first to see Magliabechi before the Grand Duke. A confession by Montesquieu states, with open candour, a fact in his life, which confirms this jealousy of the Great with the Literary Character. "On my entering into life, I was spoken of as a man of talents, and people of condition gave me a favourable reception; but when the success of my Persian Letters proved perhaps that I was not unworthy of my reputation, and the public began to esteem me, *my reception with the great was discouraging, and I experienced innumerable mortifications.*" Montesquieu subjoins a reflection sufficiently humiliating for the mere nobleman: "The Great, inwardly wounded with the glory of a celebrated name, seek to humble it. In general he only can patiently endure the fame of others, who deserves fame himself." This sort of jealousy unquestionably prevailed in the late Lord Orford; a wit, a man of the world, and a man of rank, but while he considered literature as a mere amusement, he was mortified at not obtaining literary celebrity; he felt his authorial, always beneath his personal character; he broke with every literary man who looked up to him as their friend; and how he has delivered his

feelings on Johnson, Goldsmith and Gray, whom unfortunately for him he personally knew, it fell to my lot to discover; I could add, but not diminish, what has been called the severity of that delineation.*

Who was the dignified character, Lord Chesterfield or Samuel Johnson, when the great author, proud of his labour, rejected his lordship's sneaking patronage? "I value myself," says Swift, "upon making the ministry desire to be acquainted with Parnell, and not Parnell with the ministry." Piron would not suffer the Literary Character to be lowered in his presence. Entering the apartment of a nobleman, who was conducting another peer to the stairs head, the latter stopped to make way for Piron. "Pass on my lord," said the noble master, "pass, he is only a poet." Piron replied, "since our qualities are declared, I shall take my rank," and placed himself before the lord. Nor is this pride, the true source of elevated character, refused to the great artist as well as the great author. Michael Angelo, invited by Julius II. to the Court of Rome, found that intrigue had indisposed his Holiness towards him, and more than once, the great artist was suffered to linger in at-

* Calamities of Authors, vol. i.

tendance in the anti-chamber. One day the indignant man of genius exclaimed, "tell his holiness, if he wants me, he must look for me elsewhere." He flew back to his beloved Florence, to proceed with that celebrated cartoon, which afterwards became a favourite study with all artists. Thrice the Pope wrote for his return, and at length menaced the little state of Tuscany with war, if Michael Angelo prolonged his absence. He returned. The sublime artist knelt at the feet of the Father of the Church, turning aside his troubled countenance in silence; an intermeddling Bishop offered himself as a mediator, apologising for our artist by observing, that "of this proud humour are these painters made!" Julius turned to this pitiable mediator, and, as Vasari tells used a switch on this occasion, observing, "you speak injuriously of him, while I am silent. It is you who are ignorant." Raising Michael Angelo, Julius II. embraced the man of genius. "I can make lords of you every day, but I cannot create a Titian," said the Emperor Charles V. to his courtiers, who had become jealous of the hours, and the half-hours, which that monarch managed, that he might converse with the man of genius at his work. There is an elevated intercourse between Power and Genius; and if they are deficient in reciprocal esteem, neither are great. The intellectual nobility seems to

have been asserted by De Harlay, a great French statesman, for when the academy was once not received with royal honours, he complained to the French monarch, observing, that when "a man of letters was presented to Francis I. for the first time, the king always advanced three steps from the throne to receive him."

If ever the voice of individuals can recompense a life of literary labour it is in speaking a foreign accent—it sounds like the distant plaudit of posterity. The distance of space between the literary character and the inquirer in some respects represents the distance of time which separates the author from the next age. Fontenelle was never more gratified than when a Swede, arriving at the gates of Paris, inquired of the custom-house officers where Fontenelle resided, and expressed his indignation that not one of them had ever heard of his name. Hobbes expresses his proud delight that his portrait was sought after by foreigners, and that the Great Duke of Tuscany made the philosopher the object of his first inquiries. Camden was not insensible to the visits of German noblemen, who were desirous of seeing the British Pliny; and Pocock, while he received no aid from patronage at home for his Oriental studies, never relaxed in those unrequited labours, from the warm per-

sonal testimonies of learned foreigners, who hastened to see and converse with this prodigy of eastern learning.

Yes! to the very presence of the man of genius will the world spontaneously pay their tribute of respect, of admiration, or of love; many a pilgrimage has he lived to receive, and many a crowd has followed his footsteps. There are days in the life of genius which repay its sufferings. Demosthenes confessed he was pleased when even a fish-woman of Athens pointed him out. Corneille had his particular seat in the theatre, and the audience would rise to salute him when he entered. At the presence of Raynal in the House of Commons, the speaker was requested to suspend the debate till that illustrious foreigner, who had written on the English parliament, was there placed and distinguished, to his honour. Spinoza, when he gained a humble livelihood by grinding optical glasses, at an obscure village in Holland, was visited by the first General in Europe, who, for the sake of this philosophical conference, suspended his march.

In all ages, and in all countries, has this feeling been created; nor is it a temporary ebullition, nor an individual honour; it comes out of the heart of man. In Spain, whatever was most beautiful in its kind was described by the name of the

great Spanish bard; every thing excellent was called a *Lope*. Italy would furnish a volume of the public honours decreed to literary men, nor is that spirit extinct, though the national character has fallen by the chance of fortune; and *Metastasio* and *Tiraboschi* received what had been accorded to *Petrarch* and to *Poggio*. Germany, patriotic to its literary characters, is the land of the enthusiasm of genius. On the borders of the *Linnet*, in the public walk of *Zurich*, the monument of *Gesner*, erected by the votes of his fellow-citizens, attests their sensibility; and a solemn funeral honoured the remains of *Klopstock*, led by the senate of *Hamburgh*, with fifty thousand votaries, so penetrated by one universal sentiment, that this multitude preserved a mournful silence, and the interference of the police ceased to be necessary through the city at the solemn burial of the man of genius. Has even *Holland* proved insensible? The statue of *Erasmus*, in *Rotterdam*, still animates her young students, and offers a noble example to her neighbours of the influence even of the sight of the statue of a man of genius; nor must it be forgotten that the senate of *Rotterdam* declared of the emigrant *Bayle*, that "such a man should not be considered as a foreigner." In *France*, since *Francis I.* created genius, and *Louis XIV.* knew to be liberal to it, the impulse was communicated to the French people. There the statues of their illustrious

men spread inspiration on the spots which living they would have haunted—in their theatres the great dramatists; in their Institute their illustrious authors; in their public edifices their other men of genius.* This is worthy of the country which privileged the family of La Fontaine to be for ever exempt from taxes, and decreed that the productions of the mind were not seizable, when the creditors of Crebillon would have attached the produce of his tragedies. These distinctive honours accorded to genius were in unison with their decree respecting the will of Bayle. It was the subject of a lawsuit between the heir of the will, and the inheritor by blood. The latter contested that this great literary character, being a fugitive for religion and dying in a prohibited country, was without the power of disposing of his property, and that our author,

* We cannot bury the Fame of our English worthies—that exists before us, independent of ourselves; but we bury the influence of their inspiring presence in those immortal memorials of genius easy to be read by all men, their statues and their busts, consigning them to spots seldom visited, and often too obscure to be viewed. Count Algarotti has ingeniously said, “L’argent que nous employons en tabatières et en pompons servoit aux anciens à célébrer la mémoire des grands hommes par des monumens dignes de passer à la postérité; et là où l’on brûle des feux de joie pour une victoire remportée, ils élevèrent des arcs de triomphe de porphyre et de marbre.” May we not, for our honour, and for the advantage of our artists, predict better times for ourselves?

when he resided in Holland, was civilly dead. In the parliament of Toulouse the judge decided that learned men are free in all countries; that he who had sought in a foreign land an asylum from his love of letters, was no fugitive; that it was unworthy of France to treat as a stranger a son in whom she gloried; and he protested against the notion of a civil death to such a man as Bayle, whose name was living throughout Europe.

Even the most common objects are consecrated when associated with the memory of the man of genius. We still seek for his tomb on the spot where it has vanished; the enthusiasts of genius still wander on the hills of Pausilippe, and muse on Virgil to retrace his landscape; or as Sir William Jones ascended Forest-hill, with the Allegro in his hand, and step by step, seemed in his fancy to have trodden in the foot-path of Milton; there is a grove at Magdalen College which retains the name of Addison's walk, where still the student will linger; and there is a cave at Macao, which is still visited by the Portuguese from a national feeling, where Camoens is said to have composed his *Lusiad*. When Petrarch was passing by his native town, he was received with the honours of his fame; but when the heads of the town, unawares to Petrarch, con-

ducted him to the house where the poet was born, and informed him that the proprietor had often wished to make alterations, but that the towns-people had risen to insist that the house which has consecrated by the birth of Petrarch should be preserved unchanged; this was a triumph more affecting to Petrarch than his coronation at Rome. In the village of Certaldo is still shown the house of Boccaccio; and on a turret are seen the arms of the Medici, which they had sculptured there, with an inscription alluding to a small house and a name which filled the world. "Foreigners," says Anthony Wood of Milton, "have, out of pure devotion, gone to Bread-street to see the house and chamber where he was born;" and at Paris the house which Voltaire inhabited, and at Ferney his study, are both preserved inviolate. Thus is the very apartment of a man of genius, the chair he studied in, the table he wrote on, contemplated with curiosity; the spot is full of local impressions. And all this happens from an unsatisfied desire to see and hear him whom we never can see nor hear; yet in a moment of illusion, if we listen to a traditional conversation, if we can revive one of his feelings, if we can catch but a dim image of his person, we reproduce this man of genius before us, on whose features we so often dwell. Even the rage of the mili-

tary spirit has taught itself to respect the abode of genius; and Cæsar and Sylla, who never spared their own Roman blood, alike felt their spirit rebuked, and saved the literary city of Athens. The house of the man of genius has been spared amidst contending empires, from the days of Pindar to those of Buffon; and the recent letter of Prince Schwartzenberg to the Countess, for the preservation of the philosopher's château, is a memorial of this elevated feeling.*

And the meanest things, the very household stuff, associated with the memory of the man of genius, become the objects of our affections. At

* In the grandeur of Milton's verse we perceive the feeling he associated with this literary honour.

“ The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus when temple and tower
Went to the ground —————.”—*Sonnet VIII.*

“ *To the Countess of Buffon, in Montbard.*

“ THE Emperor, my Sovereign, having ordered me to provide for the security of all places dedicated to the sciences, and of such as recall the remembrance of men who have done honour to the age in which they lived, I have the honour to send to your ladyship a safeguard for your château of Montbard.

“ The residence of the Historian of Nature must be sacred in the eyes of all the friends of science. It is a domain which belongs to all mankind.—I have the honour, &c.

“ SCHWARTZENBERG.”

a festival in honour of Thomson the poet, the chair in which he composed part of his Seasons was produced, and appears to have communicated some of the raptures to which he was liable who had sat in that chair; Rabelais, among his drollest inventions, could not have imagined that his old cloak would have been preserved in the University of Montpellier for future doctors to wear on the day they took their degree; nor could Shakespeare, that the mulberry tree which he planted would have been multiplied into relics. But in such instances the feeling is right with a wrong direction; and while the populace are exhausting their emotions on an old tree, an old chair, and an old cloak, they are paying that involuntary tribute to genius which forms its pride, and will generate the race.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE INFLUENCE OF AUTHORS.

WHEREFORE should not the literary character be associated in utility or glory with the other professional classes of society? These indeed press more immediately on the attention of men; they are stimulated by personal interests, and they are remunerated by honours; while the literary character, from its habits, is secluded; producing its usefulness in concealment, and often at a late period in life; not always too of immediate application, and often even unvalued by the passing generation.

It is curious to observe of the characters of the other classes in society, how each rises or falls in public esteem, according to the exigencies of the times. Ere we had swept from the seas all the fleets of our rivals, the naval hero was the popular character; while the military, from the political panic occasioned by standing armies, was invariably lowered in public regard; the extraordinary change of circumstances, and the genius

of one man, have entirely reversed the public feeling.*

The commercial character was long, even in this country, placed very low in the scale of honour; the merchant was considered merely as a money-trader, profiting by the individual distress of the nobleman, and afterwards was viewed with jealous eyes by the country gentleman. A Dutch monarch, who initiated us into the mysteries of banks and loans, by combining commercial influence with political power, raised the mercantile character.

But the commercial prosperity of a nation inspires no veneration in mankind; nor will its military power win their affection. There is an interchange of opinions, as well as of spices and specie, which induces nations to esteem each other; and there is a glorious succession of au-

* Mr. Gifford, in his notes to his recent Translation of Persius, with his accustomed keenness of spirit, has detected this fact in our popular manners. "Persius, whenever he has occasion for a more worthless character than ordinary, commonly repairs to the camp for him. Fielding and Smollet, in compliance with the cant of their times, manifested a patriotic abhorrence of the military; and seldom went farther for a blockhead, a parasite, or an adept in low villainy, than the Armylist. We have outlived this stupid piece of injustice, and a 'led-captain' is no longer considered as the indispensable *rice* of every novel."

thors, as well as of seamen and soldiers, for ever standing before the eyes of the universe.

It is by our authors that foreigners have been taught to subdue their own prejudices. About the year 1700, the Italian Gemelli told all Europe that he could find nothing among us but our *writings* to distinguish us from the worst of barbarians. Our civil wars, and our great revolution, had probably disturbed the Italian's imagination. Too long we appeared a people whose genius partook of the density and variableness of our climate, incapacitated even by situation, from the enjoyment of arts which had not yet travelled to us; and as if Nature herself had designed to disjoin us from more polished neighbours and brighter skies. We now arbitrate among the nations of the world; we possess their involuntary esteem; nor is there a man of genius among them who stands unconnected with our intellectual sovereignty.

“ We conquered France, but felt our captive's charms,
Her arts victorious triumphed o'er our arms.”

At the moment Pope was writing these lines, that silent operation of genius had commenced, which changes the fate of nations. The first writers of France were passing over into England to learn to think and write, or thought and wrote

like Englishmen in France.* This singular revolution in the human mind, and, by its re-action, in human affairs, was not effected by merchants profiting over them by superior capital; or by admirals and generals humiliating them by victories; but by our authors, whose works are now printed at foreign presses, a circumstance which proves, as much as the commerce and prowess of England, the ascendancy of her genius. Even had our nation displayed more limited resources than its awful powers have opened; had the sphere of

* Voltaire borrowed all the genius of our country; our poetry and our philosophy. Buffon began by translating Hales's "Vegetable Static's;" and before Linnæus classed his plants, and Buffon began his Natural History, our own naturalist Ray had opened their road to Nature. Bacon, Newton, and Boyle, reduced the fanciful philosophy of France into experiment and demonstration. Helvetius, Diderot, and their brothers, gleaned their pre-ordained discoveries from our Shaftesbury, Mandeville, and Toland; whom sometimes they only translated. Even our novelists were closely imitated.—Our great compilations of voyages and travels, Hackluyt, Churchill, &c. furnished Montesquieu with the moral facts he required for his large picture of his "Esprit des Loix." The Cyclopædia of Chambers was the parent of the French work. Even historical compilers existed in our country before the race appeared in France. Our Universal History, and Stanley, Echard, and Hooke, preceded Rollin and other French abridgers of history; while Hume and our philosophical historians set them a nobler example, which remains for them yet to rival.

its dominion been only its island boundaries, could the same literary character have predominated, we might have attained to the same eminence and admiration in the hearts of our continental neighbours. The small cities of Athens and of Florence will perpetually attest the influence of the literary character over other nations; the one received the tributes of the mistress of the universe, when the Romans sent their youth to be educated at Athens; while the other, at the revival of letters, beheld every polished European crowding to its little court.

There is a small portion of men, who appear marked out by nature and habit, for the purpose of cultivating their thoughts in peace, and giving activity to their sentiments, by disclosing them to the people. Those who govern a nation cannot at the same time enlighten them;—authors stand between the governors and the governed.

Important discoveries are often obtained by accident; but the single thought of a man of genius, which has sometimes changed the dispositions of a people, and even of an age, is slowly matured in meditation. Even the mechanical inventions of genius must first become perfect in its own solitary abode, ere the world can possess them. The people are a vast body, of which men of

genius are the eyes and the hands ; and the public mind is the creation of the philosophical writer ; these are axioms as demonstrable as any in Euclid, and as sure in their operation, as any principle in mechanics. When Epicurus published his doctrines, men immediately began to express themselves with freedom on the established religion ; the dark and fearful superstitions of paganism fell into neglect, and mouldered away, the inevitable fate of established falsehood. When Machiavel, living amidst the principalities of Italy, where stratagem and assassination were the politics of those wretched rivals, by lifting the veil from these cabinets of banditti, that calumniated men of genius, alarmed the world by exposing a system subversive of all human virtue and happiness, and led the way to political freedom. When Locke and Montesquieu appeared, the old systems of government were reviewed ; the principles of legislation were developed : and many changes have succeeded, and are still to succeed. Politicians affect to disbelieve that abstract principles possess any considerable influence on the conduct of the subject. “ In times of tranquillity,” they say, “ they are not wanted, and in times of confusion they are never heard.” But this has been their error ; it is in leisure, when they are not wanted, that they are studied by the speculative part of mankind ; and when

they are wanted, they are already prepared for the active multitude, who come like a phalanx, pressing each other with an unity of feeling and an integrity of force. Paley would not close his eyes on what was passing before him ; and he has observed, that during the convulsive troubles at Geneva, the political theory of Rousseau was prevalent in their contests ; while in the political disputes of our country, those ideas of civil authority displayed in the works of Locke, recurred in every form. How, therefore, can the character of an author be considered as subordinate in society ? Politicians do not secretly think so, at the moment they are proclaiming it to the world ; nor do they fancy, as they would have us imagine, that paper and pens are only rags and feathers ; whatever they affect, the truth is, that they consider the worst actions of men, as of far less consequence than the propagation of their opinions. They well know, as Sophocles declared, that “ opinion is ever stronger than truth.” Have politicians not often exposed their disguised terrors ? Books, and sometimes their authors, have been burnt ; but burning books is no part of their refutation. Cromwell was alarmed when he saw the *Oceana* of Harrington, and dreaded the effects of that volume more than the plots of the royalists ; while Charles II. trembled at an author, only in his manuscript state ; and in the

height of terror, and to the honour of genius, it was decreed, that "Scribere est agere."*

Observe the influence of authors in forming the character of men, where the solitary man of genius stamps his own on a people. The parsimonious habits, the money-getting precepts, the wary cunning, and not the most scrupulous means to obtain the end, of Dr. Franklin, imprinted themselves on his Americans; loftier feelings could not elevate a man of genius, who became the founder of a trading people, retaining the habits of a journeyman printer: while the elegant tastes of Sir William Jones could inspire the servants of a commercial corporation to open new and vast sources of knowledge; a mere company of traders, influenced by the literary character, enlarge the stores of the imagina-

* Algernon Sydney was condemned to death for certain manuscripts found in his library; and the reason alleged was, that *scribere est agere*—that to *write* is to *act*. The papers which served to condemn Sydney, it appears, were only answers to Filmer's obsolete Defence of Monarchical Tyranny.—The metaphysical inference drawn by the crown lawyers is not a necessary consequence. Authors may write that which they may not afterwards approve; their manuscript opinions are very liable to be changed, and authors even change those opinions they have published. A man ought only to *lose his head* for his opinions, in the metaphysical sense; opinions against opinions; but not an axe against a pen.

tion, and collect fresh materials for the history of human nature.

I have said that authors produce their usefulness in privacy, and that their good is not of immediate application, and often unvalued by their own generation. On this occasion the name of Evelyn always occurs to me. This author supplied the public with nearly thirty works, at a time when taste and curiosity were not yet domiciliated in our country; his patriotism warmed beyond the eightieth year of his age; and in his dying hand he held another legacy for his nation. Whether his enthusiasm was introducing to us a taste for medals and prints; or intent on purifying the city of smoke and smells, and to sweeten it by plantations of native plants; or having enriched our orchards and our gardens; placed summer-ices on our tables, and varied even the sallads of our country; furnishing "a Gardener's Kalendar," which, as Cowly said, was to last as long "as months and years," and the horticulturist will not forget Father Evelyn in the heir of his fame, Millar; whether the philosopher of the Royal Society, or the lighter satirist of the toilette, or the fine moralist for active as well as contemplative life;—yet in all these changes of a studious life, the better part of his history has not been told.—While Britain retains her awful

situation among the nations of Europe, the "Sylva" of Evelyn will endure with her triumphant oaks. In the third edition of that work the heart of the patriot exults at its result : he tells Charles I. " how many millions of timber trees, besides infinite others, have been propagated and planted *at the instigation, and by the sole direction of this work.*" It was an author in his studious retreat, who casting a prophetic eye on the age we live in, secured the late victories of our naval sovereignty. Inquire at the Admiralty how the fleets of Nelson have been constructed? and they can tell you that it was with the oaks which the genius of Evelyn planted.*

The same character existed in France, where De Serres in 1599 composed a work on the cultivation of mulberry trees in reference to the art of raising silk-worms. He taught his fellow citizens to convert a leaf into silk, and silk to become the representative of gold. Our author encountered the hostility of the prejudices of his times in giving his country one of her staple commodities ; but I lately received a medal re-

* Since this has been written, the *Diary* of Evelyn is published : it cannot add to his general character, whatever it may be ; but we may anticipate much curious amusement from the diary of a literary character whose studies formed the business of life.

cently struck in honour of De Serres, by the Agricultural Society of the department of the Seine. We are too slow in commemorating the genius of our own country; and our authors are defrauded even in the debt we are daily incurring of their posthumous fame.

When an author writes on a national subject, he awakens all the knowledge which lies buried in the sleep of nations; he calls around him, as it were, every man of talents; and though his own fame should be eclipsed by his successors, yet the emanation, the morning light, broke from his source. Our naturalist Ray, though no man was more modest in his claims, delighted to tell a friend that "since the publication of his catalogue of Cambridge Plants, many were prompted to botanical studies, and to herbalise in their walks in the fields." A work in France, under the title of "L'Ami des Hommes," first spread there a general passion for agricultural pursuits; and although the national ardour carried all to excess, yet marshes were drained and waste lands enclosed. The *Emilius* of Rousseau, whatever errors and extravagancies a system which would bring us back to nature may contain, operated a complete revolution in modern Europe, by changing the education of men; and the boldness and novelty of some of its principles com-

municated a new spring to the human intellect. The commercial world owes to two retired philosophers, in the solitude of their study, Locke and Smith, those principles which dignify Trade into a liberal pursuit, and connect it with the happiness of a people.

Beccaria, who dared to raise his voice in favour of humanity, against the prejudices of many centuries, by his work on "Crimes and Punishments," at length abolished torture; and Locke and Voltaire, on "Toleration," have long made us tolerant. But the principles of many works of this stamp have become so incorporated in our minds and feelings, that we can scarcely at this day conceive the fervour they excited at the time, or the magnanimity of their authors in the decision of their opinions.

And to whom does the world owe more than to the founders of miscellaneous writing, or the creators of new and elegant tastes in European nations? We possess one peculiar to ourselves. To Granger our nation is indebted for that visionary delight of recalling from their graves the illustrious dead; and, as it were, of living with them, as far as a familiarity with their features and their very looks forms a part of life. This pleasing taste for portraits seems peculiar

to our nation, and was created by the ingenuity of a solitary author, who had very nearly abandoned those many delightful associations which a collection of fine portraits affords, by the want of a due comprehension of their nature among his friends, and even at first in the public. Before the miscellanists rose, learning was the solitary enjoyment of the insulated learned; they spoke a language of their own; and they lived in a desert, separated from the world: but the miscellanists became their interpreters, opening a communication between two spots, close to each other, yet which were so long separated, the closet and the world. These authors were not Bacons, Newtons, and Leibnitzes; but they were Addison, Fontenelle, and Feyjoo, the first popular authors in their nations who taught England, France, and Spain to become a reading people; while their fugitive page imbues with intellectual sweetness an uncultivated mind, like the perfumed mould which the swimmer in the Persian Sadi took up; it was a piece of common earth, but astonished at its fragrance, he asked whether it were musk or amber? "I am nothing but earth; but roses were planted on my soil, and their odorous virtues have deliciously penetrated through all my pores; I have retained the infusion of sweetness; otherwise I had been but a lump of earth."

There is a singleness and unity in the pursuits of genius, through all ages, which produces a sort of consanguinity in the characters of authors. Men of genius, in their different classes, living at distinct periods, or in remote countries, seem to be the same persons with another name: and thus the literary character who has long departed, seems only to have transmigrated. In the great march of the human intellect he is still occupying the same place, and he is still carrying on, with the same powers, his great work, through a line of centuries.

In the history of genius there is no chronology, for to us every thing it has done is present; and the earliest attempt is connected with the most recent. Many men of genius must arise before a particular man of genius can appear. Before Homer there were other bards—we have a catalogue of their names and works. Corneille could not have been the chief dramatist of France, had not the founders of the French drama preceded him; and Pope could not have appeared before Dryden. Whether the works of genius are those of pure imagination, or searches after truth, they are alike tinged by the feelings and the events of their times; but the man of genius must be placed in the line of his descent.

Aristotle, Hobbes, and Locke, Descartes and Newton, approximate more than we imagine. The same chain of intellect Aristotle holds, through the intervals of time, is held by them; and links will only be added by their successors. The naturalists, Pliny, Gesner, Aldrovandus, and Buffon, derive differences in their characters, from the spirit of the times; but each only made an accession to the family estate, while each was the legitimate representative of the family of the naturalists. Aristophanes, Molière, and Foote, are brothers of the family of national wits: the wit of Aristophanes was a part of the common property, and Molière and Foote were Aristophanic. Plutarch, La Mothe le Vayer, and Bayle, alike busied in amassing the materials of human thought and human action, with the same vigorous and vagrant curiosity, must have had the same habits of life. If Plutarch was credulous, La Mothe le Vayer sceptical, and Bayle philosophical, the heirs of the family may differ in their dispositions, but no one will arraign the integrity of the lineal descent. My learned and reflecting friend, whose original researches have enriched our national history, has thus observed on the character of Wickliffe:—"To complete our idea of the importance of Wickliffe, it is only necessary to add, that as his writings made John Huss the reformer of Bohemia, so the writings of

John Huss led Martin Luther to be the reformer of Germany ; so extensive and so incalculable are the consequences which sometimes follow from human actions."* Our historian has accompanied this by giving the very feelings of Luther in early life on his first perusal of the works of John Huss : we see the spark of creation caught at the moment ; a striking influence of the generation of character ! Thus a father spirit has many sons ; and several of the great revolutions in the history of man have been opened by such, and carried on by that secret creation of minds visibly operating on human affairs. In the history of the human mind, he takes an imperfect view, who is confined to contemporary knowledge, as well as he who stops short with the Ancients, and has not advanced with their descendants. Those who do not carry their researches through the genealogical lines of genius, will mutilate their minds, and want the perfect strength of an entire man.

Such are "the great lights of the world," by whom the torch of knowledge has been successively seized and transmitted from one to the other. This is that noble image borrowed from a Grecian game, which Plato has applied to the

* Turner's History of England, vol. ii, p. 432.

rapid generations of man, to mark how the continuity of human affairs is maintained from age to age. The torch of genius is perpetually transferred from hand to hand amidst this fleeting scene.

THE END.

CONTENTS.



Chapter.	Page.
I. On Literary Characters	7
II. Youth of Genius	18
III. The First Studies	47
IV. The Irritability of Genius	69
V. The Spirit of Literature, and the Spirit of Society	91
VI. Literary Solitude	111
VII. The Meditations of Genius	121
VIII. The Enthusiasm of Genius	142
IX. Literary Jealousy	165
X. Want of Mutual Esteem	170
XI. Self-praise	175
XII. The Domestic Life of Genius	191
XIII. The Matrimonial State	212
XIV. Literary Friendships	230
XV. The Literary and the Personal Cha- racter	236
XVI. The Man of Letters	247
XVII. Literary Old Age	265
XVIII. Literary Honours	272
XIX. The Influence of Authors	286

Feb. 12th -

- 5 shirts
- 5 cravats
- 3 Handk.
- 2 Waist.
- 1 pr. socks
- 1 pr. dr.

Feb. 22nd -

- 4 sh.
- 5 crav.
- 2. Waist.
- 2. pr. socks
- 2. pr. dr.
- 1. Fl. sh.
- 2. Handk.

March 3rd

- 4 shirts
- 7 cravats
- 2 Waist
- 1. pr. dr.
- 1. Fl. sh.

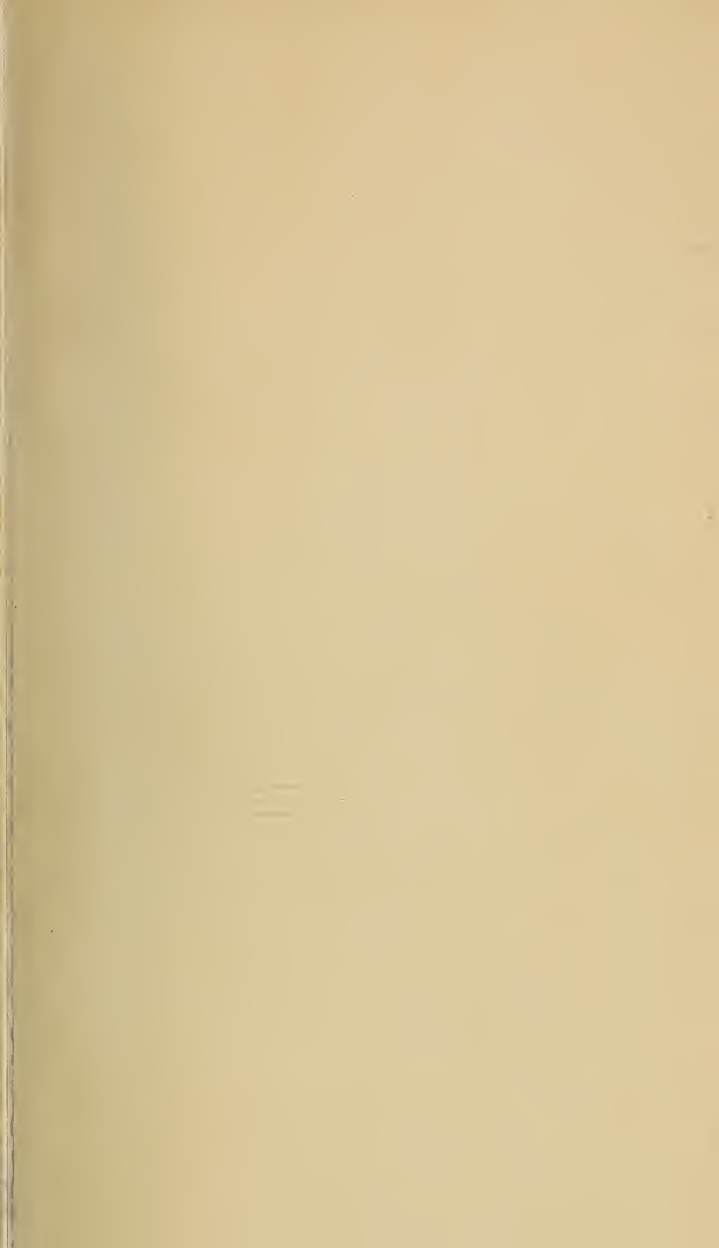
MS

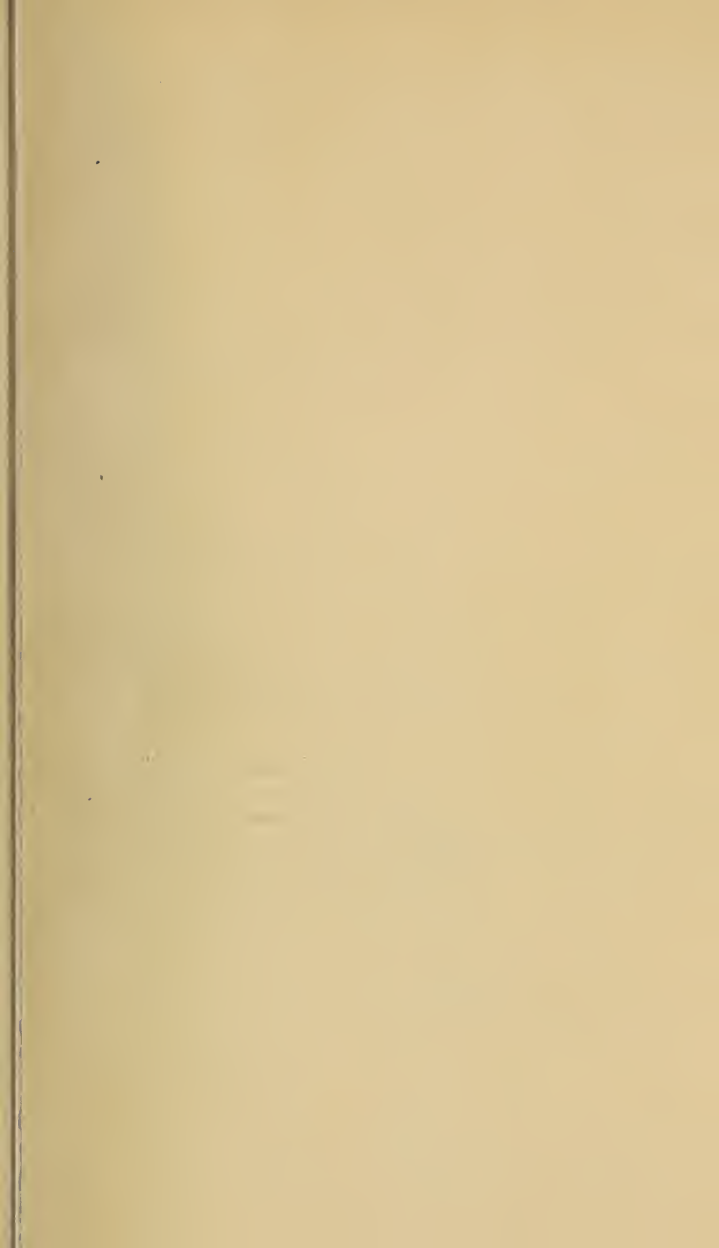
18

18

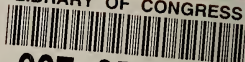
18

18





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 027 250 679 6